When Lucifer Fell

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Additional Tags:	Basically trust porn, Pretty much 150 pages of "no you talk first", Trust Issues, PLEASE don't read this when you're tired, Slightly Needy Hannibal, PTSD, POV Hannibal Lecter, READ. THIS. TWICE., Yeah OK basically how Hannibal got his groove back shut up, Love Confessions, Hannibal "I'm going to pretend I'm Not Drugged and Just do "Normal" Shit" Lecter, Introspection, Psychological Horror, Psychological Trauma, Writing this Hannibal POV is my personal Mount Everest and it might have killed me, How to evolve a primarily cat and mouse friendship, Ladies and Gentlemen Hannibal Lecter makes friends with a puppy, Roommates, Hannibal "Martyr Complex" Lecter, If I didn't make you all melt with Will's new puppy I'm not doing this right, Demisexual Hannibal Lecter, Bottom Hannibal Lecter, Rio the Emotional Support dog, lovemaking, Even cannibals need sweet demiromantic loving, Will is a snarky little pastry, A dog heals their relationship people and it's pretty fucking cute, Writing Interval 3 was my happy place folks, so saddle up for a pretty pretentious dreamscape I'm not even a little sorry, Interactive Soundtrack, Post-Hannibal (TV) Season/Series 03, Childhood Trauma, Hannibal Rising References, Chopin music, Sparklehorse music, Michelangelo Buonarotti References, Metaphors, so many metaphors!, Music, Communication Failure, Nonverbal Communication, Non-Linear Narrative, INFJ writing ENFJ, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Dante Alighieri References, La Divina Commedia | The Divine Comedy References, Paradox, READ. THIS. SLOWLY!!, Michelangelo Buonarotti Poetry, Switch Hannibal Lecter, Please click on song titles in Chapters 2 and 5 and 8, Radiohead music, Hannibal Lecter Speaks French, You're not required to like everything Hannibal does and thinks in this, The true smut is in Chapter 8, Hannibal Lecter is a great dog dad, Hannibal Lecter Speaks Lithuanian, Fluid Sexuality, Team Hannibal Lecter cries during sex with Will, sort of orgasm denial, darling kink, Blow Jobs, First Time Blow Jobs, Anal Fingering, Masturbation, Anal Sex, Multiple Orgasms, Orgasm Delay, Dirty Talk, Will is a God at dirty talk
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When Lucifer Fell

by ElenLuyddog

Summary

They are still hunting each other to a degree.

They continue to waltz around one another, uncertain and hurt for these past six months following the first safe house in El Salvador, where Chiyoh assisted him with their injuries. Will barely spoke to him for the first half of their year together as roommates. He could not and still does not blame Will, considering his lack of consent and feel of being whisked away from his family in addition to his promise to the FBI to bring him back into custody. The boy is allowed his own justified feelings. But for his mood to continue like this for an entire year appears petulant.

He still regrets nothing.

Some days are less gloomy than others.

Some days Will makes peace with this last leg of his transformation, although blended with survivor guilt, yet apostatizes the next like a sulky adolescent.

None of this is unexpected.

His world, on the other hand, continues on as planned.

Notes

Inspired by "Even Steven" by harleygirl2648

Inspired by "Ends, Ways, Means & Risks" by empathalitis (capgotback) and tinystark616

Unconsciously inspired by "Hannibal Undone" by HyphenL

Chapter 1

Saturday. 17, September 2016

Central Argentina.

Thin material of closed eyelids reflects a bright Argentinian weekend sunrise.

Tissue and glands pigment the color into a flat, shallow golden-bronze, reminiscent of Mercury's smooth, naked contours glittering against a Florentine sun. Its dimension teeters.

And teeters once more, although lying still.

A deep, hollow breath groans sharply, a parched click in the back of his throat.

The Lago Musters sighs an earthy breath, its scent traveling on warm, sunny air through a cracked open window. A cool horizon runs across chest hair, provoking goosebumps around a bare belly button.

But he has no memory of taking his shirt off.

His eyes snap open, remembering.

Chapter 2

Will's mediocre-scented aftershave exhales.

He breathes in deeply, smelling its preoccupation with getting to the Senguerr River early and gradually increasing, blossoming notes of living in relative, livable internal chaos.

Its predictable resentment strongly blows around the back door and perhaps even out onto the concrete path toward his garage or truck.

Coffee buries its scent.

The smell of toast, marmalade, and quail eggs accumulates along with it, blowing on the cool, sun-scented breeze exhaling through the kitchen window.

He finishes his breakfast and stands up from the kitchen island.

Dishes are rinsed and softly placed in the dishwasher, save for his coffee mug. Its ceramic base taps down onto quartz, and as if by proxy, the Lago Muster sighs a heavier blend of fresh water and musty soil through the window over the sink.

He smiles and closes his eyes, lifting his chin with the deepest inhale.

It almost smells like his childhood home. And the impression of a young Hannibal Lecter shifts inside him, the ancient memory of himself too far away to be fully remembered, although a few rooms in his memory palace gently twitch with slight recognition.

Synapses sing a siren call to neighboring nerves, and last night becomes even more vivid.

Eyelashes press into the tops of his cheeks, sensing the tips of grown-out, side-swept bangs brushing at the top of his cheekbone.

A hummingbird sings somewhere outside.

He smiles to himself, dropping his fingertips to the cool quartz countertop and missing the handle of his mug by a few centimeters. An animated charge runs through his finger pads and up his arm, whether from the Columbian blend or the hot shower that washed away last night. His eyes open, remembering.

Will unceremoniously drops a large Bocachico Trout on the counter while he is in the middle of dicing cassava.

'An offering?' he teases, smirking into annoyed brown eyes.

Will glares back at him, grinding his molars and conjuring a slight shift in his jaw and paler neck tendons. But *he* maintains his polite nature, watching Will sigh with frustration and turning around to stomp into the corridor, pounding his stockinged feet up the stairs.

He feels his hands lifting onto each hip, pressing his lips together and studying the silver latticed masterpiece shining against White Carrara quartz.

‘Well, what *shall* we do with you?’

The last of the dark roast cascades down his throat, observing its deep notes with a small sigh.

Will’s victim finds itself grilled and clothed in garlic-lemon butter herb sauce in addition to the grilled cassava and cold risotto salad with tomatoes and sauteed mushrooms. The menu *has* been unfortunately lacking in heartier protein except for what is currently in the freezer. Although, fresher protein tends to have a preferable taste of the kill within it, and he is currently craving *this* attribute the most.

Despite the itch, he still takes his time with a progressively more resentful Will even after a year.

It could almost be misinterpreted as waiting.

Waiting and perhaps a *little* coddling.

A seductive note of elderflower against gooseberry gently wafts into nostrils.

Will chose their death, but *he* chooses their second life together as roommates. The decision had to be made quickly at the foot of the cliff, and the fact that William may or may not have been unconscious for the following 48 hours is irrelevant.

However, last night's meal seemed like the appropriate and almost tribal atonement to their new home and surroundings, especially given the gradual spring-like weather on an anniversary of sorts. Sauvignon Blanc runs softly down his throat with a hint of shameless pride, the trout humming strong citrus notes as they contentedly ascend arias up into his nasal cavity.

Will bites into his trout, quietly humming approval.

He manages to smile without the secret knowledge of its preparation against his face.

Will’s reactions to their meals together seem to be his preferred language lately, and it’s not unattractive.

He taps the ledge of his Riedel glass on his bottom lip before sitting it back down on the table, quirking an even more self-aware grin to the opposite side of the dining table.

Will sits his utensils down onto his plate with a soft clink, uncomfortably looking ahead over his shoulder and into the sitting room.

Pupils fight an instinctive curiosity.

He raises his face into the lake-scented air, the bright early-spring sunshine beaming against skin.

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They continue to waltz around one another, uncertain and hurt for these past six months following the first safe house in El Salvador, where Chiyoh assisted him with their injuries. Will barely spoke to him for the first half of their year together as roommates. He could not and still does not blame Will, considering his lack of consent and feel of being whisked away from his family in addition to his promise to the FBI to bring him back into custody. The boy is allowed his own justified feelings. But for his mood to continue like this for an entire year appears petulant.

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The Belgian lecturer and professor Adamov Ivanova has recently secured a position as a speaker on "Michelangelo as Poet and Artist" at the National University of Patagonia San Juan Bosco Art Department, speaking two to three days a week and assisting in curating the University's art museum. The famously and usually hermetic *biological* Professor Ivanova had been vacationing at the Garten Hotel in Playa El Zonte, around the time he mostly recovered from his injuries and was seeking a new career. At least the two-hour drive seems to separate the two worlds – the rural where it seems Will only exists – the urban where Ivanova thrives, for better or worse.

And Ivanova has thrived *so* well he attracted a beautiful, young husband and wife couple from the literature department. They invited the younger than expected emigrant a few weeks ago to join them in an un plan à trois. He gratefully accepted, desperate for physical discourse. He even confidently told Will of the plan beforehand but was met with Will grunting down to his plate before taking a bite of his salad.

Despite Will's routine disposition, they continue to come together for meals with surprising ease.

Dinners start bitter and uncomfortable and gradually evolve into extreme comfort where it feels as if nothing has changed. He attempts to reach out in support, in philia but is bitten in return, however justified. There are times when Will looks so sweetly receptive and he is so ready to give all of his trust and heart, only for the whole thing to dissolve into skin. Sometimes Will yells at him, hating that he "whisked him off as if he were a half-conscious damsel in distress unable to make his own decisions!"

He is not wrong.

And yet, he bears the heavy burden of Will's emotional turmoil.

The faint martyrdom, or, as Americans would call it, "taking the high road" feels like Virginia snow under his knees and cold, gloved palms on the sides of his head, slowly looking up at Jack Crawford and back at Will in the knowledge that he could always find him, for better or worse. Proud inconvenience starts to infiltrate his compassion once more, and he is, as always, fascinated and curious.

It is still fascinating to observe what occurs under Will's car hood, and it is almost pleasurable to watch him battle against himself in his last stages inside his chrysalis. His survivor guilt exacerbates depression and anger towards being saved. His anger at their connection and friendship in all its facets. His feeling like everyone and, sometimes, even his not-therapist and friend of five years pushing him in every which direction. His self-hatred over being so vulnerable in their connection and friendship (in all its iterations) despite his better judgment.

He smells every strand and knot and their multiple impressions and scents, feeling complete arousal for Will's human complexity.

But a few Asperger's-like tics have reawakened in his face and posture, whether Will is conscious of it or not. *He* , on the other hand, has never been more thankful he has not yet bought reading glasses. And this is another battle beneath this chrysalis's dermis.

Will's body language remains aware of itself, and yet his compassionate intent persists.

It is a process.

He stands by, watching Will's progress and wondering at what point this warring chrysalis will reveal its true nature. He is patient, occasionally mindful of his coddling nature.

Will has not attempted to leave as far as *he* knows, but living with this possibility hurts more than anything. So, Will was never the "damsel in distress" in the way he believes he is, but, rather, a Patroclus or Dante to follow him into unknown adventures if he so chooses.

He never clarified, thus.

Argentina does not feel like Florence in this way.

He feels his hands loosen their grip, strangely without the sensation to push or manipulate Will into conviction. Their partnership and Will's compassionate participation in the killing of the Red Dragon solidifies them as equals. He *desires* them as equals. And that flame continues to burn bright but blows in a brand-new direction, curious yet softly adamant of Will's transformed self and what it would look like in his eyes.

'Hannibal, can you lose control?'

Long, side-swept bangs drag up his cheekbone, realizing he is blinking wide. He smiles and gently purses his lips together, considering Will's jagged yet observational criticism. Next to the contented hums and breaths, it is quite pleasant to hear him using his indoor voice, if only for a brief while.

He smiles even wider at the question, observing the mix of flavors against his tongue.

He tempts to suggest, “Can *you* , William?” or refer to the Appalachian customs of the dumb supper. He knows the prior would make Will uncomfortable, if not amused through his tenuously conditioned-heteronormative discomfort.

He already envisions the reaction from between the bookending, lit pillar candles.

Will’s dark blue eyes will dilate and dart over his shoulder into the sitting room, a soft hitch interrupting a steady flow of breath and heart rate. Even a traitorous hint of testosterone either from his new or old self from inside that chrysalis would leap off his blue plaid yet ill-advised rolled-up shirt sleeves. But he strangely will not blush as he habitually clutches onto the remainders of prior self-consciousness.

His fork pierces the soft yellow sauce on his version of the trout, and a shiver runs down his spine, wanting.

Nay needing. It has been too long.

Sweet and creamy garlic slides down his throat with the charred fish, relishing each bite.

‘And what would you seek to find under my control?’ he teases, grabbing his Riedel glass.

Will takes a deep breath, looking back into his face.

‘Yourself.’

Will nods his chin down as if staring into the top frames of his glasses, deep blue eyes shining as amused as his.

Sauvignon Blanc runs faintly herbaceous down his throat.

Will slowly grins back at him, so sincerely it makes him ache.

He responds with symmetry and the past year falls away. It is as if they are in his Baltimore dining room once more, a badminton match of wits and suggestion draped over every word and sentence. The cat and mouse demeanor slowly fading to reveal pure enjoyment for one another. And the challenging spark of body chemistry and discourse that makes it easy to love Will flickers even brighter once more, proving Plato’s comparison of absolute communion between conversation and erotic love.

Will scoffs a tiny breath scented of garlic and tomatoes, looking down at his half-eaten plate.

He softly hums, smirking one end of his lips even higher than the other.

He looks down at his half-eaten plate, raising his elbows uncharacteristically onto the Koa-wood table. He almost hears Lady Murasaki’s beautiful yet stern voice bent on table manners ring through his mind. It only raises his grin even higher as he presses his hands together as if in prayer.

Fingertips tilt backward and brush at the seam of his mouth.

‘Empaths so often wish to see the people closest to them lose their inhibitions, Will. However, I do not need to tell you this.’ He drops his hands to the table’s golden red ledge, moving towards his utensils and looking down at their task. He scoops another spoonful of risotto. ‘It is, however, a control that you wish to see a person reduced under your power of perception, a redirected narcissism.’

Will lights up almost challenging in their old exercise of discourse.

“And is narcissism *not* a by-product of already existing control?”

His dark oceanic eyes spark as cerulean as the two lakes on either side of their home, the light in his tanned face a brighter bronze and complimenting faint sun-kissed and graying highlights undulating through earlobe-length curls under the dimmer glow overhead.

Something in his chest moves, watching Will hum to himself as he reaches for his Riedel glass.

Electricity dances in the air between them, begging they connect for a few quiet hours at least until Will’s inevitable resentment flares up. Then, all is silent for days once more. He can feel his entire body ache against its magnetism.

Will lifts the glass to his lips, revealing the hair on his forearm standing straight up.

‘There could not have been a first egg to give a beginning to birds,’ he grins down to a spoonful of salad, quoting Fenélon’s analysis of Aristotle as the creamy rice sinks into his throat, ‘or there would have been a first bird which gave a beginning to eggs; for a bird *comes* from an egg.”’

He maliciously grins out of the corner of one eye with just enough suggestion.

Will shifts in his seat, averting his beautiful, half-cornered gaze around the dining room.

‘You want me to submit to you in some capacity.’

His knife and fork seek out the trout and cut into the smooth, sweaty flesh.

His erection swells a little more, and dopamine happily ignites.

‘And what would you like to find at the end of this rainbow, Will? You have claimed to know me so well over the years. What more do you want to see?’

Black velvet slippers carry him through the open-concept dining room and into the sitting room at the front of the house. He closes his eyes all over again.

Will’s scent is even less dominant in this direction.

Birds and squirrels quietly chirp and chatter behind closed windows, his footsteps quiet against solid wood floors. Bronze stains the insides of closed eyes as he breathes in the smell

of a muted sun in his silently christened Castillo Lagos Simetricos.

‘I’ll rephrase my question then...’ Will sighs with correction, gazing back onto his face. ‘Who is Hannibal Lecter underneath his person-suit, when no one is looking?’

They share a small smile, and it feels like true philia once more.

He opens his eyes onto the eggshell fireplace, turning to face it.

Will reaches for his knife, and this could not have been a more attractive image.

‘Oth-other than the chronic avenging angel of judgment, of course,’ Will chuckles, gesturing it in the air before cutting into his trout.

He exhales smoothly, scooping up a piece of cassava.

‘Who *is* Hannibal Lecter without his poise?’

A tiny smirk lifts his lips, the cassava sliding down sweetly earthy.

‘You *have* seen me revealed in bloodshed during your victory over the Red Dragon, Will, among other exploits.’

His hand reaches for his Riedel glass.

‘Perhaps...’ Will brightens his eyes even further, taking another sip of his Sauvignon Blanc, ‘But never in the quieter interludes of your character.’

‘Then, you wish to figure that part of me out within your introverted perspective, beyond your vocational ramparts of analysis, something perhaps intuitive. Poise *is* but self-awareness made subjective...’

He finishes his trout, relishing in yet another culinary thrill.

Utensils crisscross, clinking against his plate.

The cloth napkin is lifted to his lips.

‘It is honesty you seek, Will, not inhibition despite your remarkable capacity for empathy. To put it precariously...” He leans forward, feeling a teasing glint in his eye. One hand instinctively flattens the small buttons of his linen shirt, almost forgetting he has forsaken wearing ties in the rural world. “It is *rather* late for transference, William.”

Will rolls his eyes, and their gazes meet.

“You forget, Dr. Lecter, you were never my therapist.”

He feels his breath restricting in his chest, relishing Will's taunting tone. His smile keeps growing, and the light in Will’s face seems to contract the symmetry.

Embarrassed blue eyes avert back down to his half-empty plate, scooping the last of his cassava.

‘I guess *all* I’m saying is that you have never fully relaxed around me lately.’

His lips ache to quip that he is not the only one.

‘And how would you intend to relax me, William?’ comes out instead, biting an inevitable, wicked glance across the table.

Will blinks, his eyes wide underneath the dimmed lights. He blushes and clears his throat, taking the last of his wine.

Dominance heightens a greater wave of serotonin and dopamine, as well as his preoccupation with Lucifer. The muscles in his face feel warm, and he wonders if this is radiating with the pleasure he still has over Will.

And when Lucifer fell...

“When Lucifer fell,” he whispers to himself, sitting down on the tuxedo sofa behind him.

The bronze world inside closed eyes tilt and wobble on their way down, his skin cooling off from the absence of a gentle Argentinian sun.

Will takes a small plastic bag from his pocket, dropping it between the lit candles.

‘A truth for a truth?’

He resists snorting, recognizing three sodium thiopental capsules.

‘As a similar saying suggests, would that *not* make the world go blind?’

‘Is that Hannibal-language for you’ll do it?’

He reclines his head back in the air, still hearing a quiet voice in his mind ring, “I really would do anything for you still, won’t I?” The last time he put sodium thiopental in his body did not pass unnoticed either and for those multi-layered memories to manifest if under the influence would be a disaster.

But for Will...

He sighs, tasting the dark roast on the exhale.

‘Within reason,’ he hears himself from a distance, pouring half a glass of what Americans call liquid courage. Poetic justice seems to be the deciding factor, rounding out that little family they incidentally created so many years ago, that little family *he* had anesthetized into liberation multiple times. It must be the sin of living in the moment as he remembers his own words from minutes before.

“Empaths often wish to see the people closest to them lose their inhibitions.”

He feels he should be honored, considering.

But the more Will's quiet and resentful demeanor continues, the more it appears he is walking in a direction he cannot see. The possibility that that path includes handing them both over to the FBI infuriates him, feeling righteous judge and jury boiling deep within bone marrow. He will sooner eat Will's heart than let that happen. So, he contents himself with believing that direction is, perhaps, his "chronic avenging angel" of compassion striking out on his own without him.

That feels a little less hurtful, but hurtful nonetheless.

Perhaps, it might also be Will's becoming that exists around the edges of his slowly slipping shadow, the Ouroboro edging its tail from its mouth. They *have* become a kind of Ouroboro that he never wants to be untied from, with or without blood-stained baptism.

But there is no telling what this chrysalis-enclosed Will is capable of effecting, and yet, on the other hand, there *is* no way to tell what this chrysalis-enclosed Will is capable of effecting. His body prickles with blissful uncertainty, not even bothering to deliberate on this for too long.

Will is not yelling and appears surprisingly receptive.

Old, familiar electricity practically dances between the lit white pillar candles, daring to set everything on fire. Beautiful yet curious uncertainty almost renders unashamed arousal.

Eyes open, softly breathing to the exposed horizontal Bloodwood beams overhead.

He stands, perfectly present, as his feet feel ready to walk across the foyer into his office/library. Now seems as good of a time as any to start writing Wednesday's lecture notes.

Will's iPad sitting on the coffee table catches the lower half of his gaze.

He feels even more drawn towards the thumb drive sticking out of the USB port. Will is usually encouraged to take his things to his room once he finishes with them. But the iPad faces the couch rather than Will's chair, where he always sits, this curious spread smelling as if it was intended for him.

Instinct sits him back down, making him feel rather like that Bocachico trout.

He feels the slightest rise in his heart rate, curious if this is what last night wrought.

And yet, it is a gift.

One hand reaches for the iPad, taking the smooth, black casing into one hand and simultaneously pushing the power button. The blue-gray lock screen is bright, and the space for Will's password feels incongruous, drawing him in even further. Will's birthdate is the first password to come to mind.

It unsurprisingly unlocked.

Curiosity precedes instinct, discovering the drive's window open and a single audio file entitled 09162016.wav sits in its white space.

They take bowls of strawberry-garnished Zabaglione in the sitting room.

Chopin's Nocturne continues to spin from a contemporary turn-table beside the unoccupied fireplace.

He smirks to himself, taking another delightfully tart spoonful and looking across the coffee table at Will. Op. 15 No. 1's pensive melody dances in the air, soothing the electricity from the dining room table into an unargumentative and silent calm.

The music is almost poetic, comparing young Frycek's melancholy to Will's (with their musical trade agreement during their Friday night dinners) playing a Nick Drake album last week during dessert.

He pops one of the sodium thiopental, the deafening silence growing between them with nary a storm.

He lifts his face into Chopin's dainty air with a deep breath, slowly closing his eyes.

'Le don de Chopin est [l'expression] des sentiments et des émotions les plus profonds et les plus complets qui aient jamais existé,' floats out of his mouth since presenting Will his wine-infused custard and the French moves as if divinity itself.

Will pauses, holding his spoon in front of his mouth with furrowed eyebrows.

He responds, pursing his lips together.

'George Sand's description of her lover's "Preludes,"' he grunts a little, lurching forward to set his bowl on the coffee table in front of him. His face lifts into the cool Argentinian spring air, looking up at a warm, red Bloodwood beam and allowing memory to wash over him. '"He made a single instrument speak a language of infinity. He could often sum up, in ten lines that a child could play, poems of a boundless exaltation, dramas of unequaled power."'

'Powerful.'

'Indeed,' he reaches for the glass cream dish, 'powerful words from an indomitable woman.'

Silence engulfs them.

They have transcended language yet again, and it, too, feels like divinity, the sincere quiet between two people or rather, as sincere as the current circumstances allow. It is beautiful to be quiet with another person, and yet, he feels like he wants to hear so much out of Will, but not necessarily out of validation for *himself* . Their currently cracked symmetry is much like their bones in the slowly eroding, hovering shadows of the cliff, waiting to be revealed by blood and moonlight.

He wants to know where Will's head is.

He wants to know if Will would leave.

He *wants* to hear his thoughts and musings without their usual display of confident anger transformed into discourse. Will's passionate presentation *does* tend to accidentally rouse an erection from simply watching his chrysalis fracture at times. He can almost see what Will could become if he allows himself and likes what he sees and imagines what they can become together.

'Oh, Will...' he sighs with a chuckle, breaking the silence.

There is so much he can follow with this.

He chooses silence, not wanting to provoke, however unwittingly and especially after taking a capsule. A little something gently yanks at his confidence, harboring distaste for this instinctive coddling nature growing inside of him.

He huffs down to his mostly eaten custard.

'A truth for a truth?'

He teasingly looks up, grazing the spoon's bowled edges across the wet lining of his top lip in a secret knowledge that this would get a little unintentional rise out of Will.

Will blinks up to the wood beams, sharply exhaling as he glances over at the fireplace.

He sincerely smirks across the distance between them, starting to guide the cream dish down onto the napkin against the coffee table. His wrist trembles partway, conjuring the spoon to chime in the glass bowl like a sprite in a J.M. Barrie play.

Aftershave and body heat flexes in the air.

A gentle calloused warmth cups his wrist and thumb, navigating the dish downwards.

It gently taps onto the napkin.

He looks up, and Will stands between the coffee table and couch.

He restrains a smile and quietly absorbs the sensitivity surrounding his rolled-up navy plaid shirt sleeves and dark jeans. Two longer faintly sun-bleached dark brown curls quietly tumble across a pale forehead, soft melanin-generated blue-gray looking down at him, concerned even from within his inner battles.

He feels warm with Will's genuine intent.

Sincere touch *has* become even rarer than discourse since dressing his wounds.

A smile chooses to lift sweetly, and he feels that philiac electricity crack in the air between them.

'There is time yet, my dear Will.'

The sodium thiopental continues as a mere surreal tickle, somewhere between that blurry line of physiology and soul. The edges of his periphery soften around Will's towering figure dropping his chin and averting a partially uncomfortable gaze. He walks back to his chair, and a faint matrix of blue and black plaid stretches as if in slow motion.

Will turns around, revealing a faint blush across his tanned cheeks.

'I would give it another 45 minutes or so.'

Will sits down and wordlessly opens his mouth, wiping his chin as if embarrassed.

A sensation wants to reach for it; to memorize the map of hair follicles and push a brown and sun-kissed curl behind one ear purely for the tactility of touch. He aches to see a fresh pink streak across pale skin up close, blooming solely from the causality of his fingers.

But five years make a world of difference.

He contents himself in the shifting from curiosity to philia to eros to philia again to a strange middle ground of two of The Four Loves. Eros, the abstract itself and Psyche's relentless pursuer, renders himself mute for the past three years but not necessarily from fond absence.

Something else holds him back, and perhaps it is unexpected distrust, a familiar but gentler iteration of post-trauma. Even his more impulsive nature never wanted to feel this way towards this magnificent creature either.

Or perhaps it is something far more self-sacrificial.

And eros continues fading until that pure moment of enjoyment for one another. So, he draws forward all over again, attempting not to surrender his confidence or the erotic part of his heart.

And yet Ivanova consented to the Castillos' proposition, ready to move on.

It was a beautifully unforgettable experience between Ms. Castillo's beautiful whimpering lips glistening with sweat and Mr. Castillo's magnificent phallus bobbing with each progressively deeper perforation before he entered his wife. He will not be too surprised if they propose another encounter and wonders if he can bring himself to accept the offer. He already envisions it, the sweaty erratic rhythm of lamp-lit writhing bodies to the melody of Ms. Castillo's beautiful, low purring and Mr. Castillo's softly cooing encouragement.

He crosses one leg over the other, purely out of instinct than memory.

He is, at last, reawakened to his senses and perhaps even sexuality.

It is not surprising after being held captive for three years by the woman he had relations with so long ago. Bedelia was far too icy and frightened despite the multiple times they had spent together until respective bedroom doors were closed hours later.

And with and *through* clear, relieved eyes, he has never felt more fully present in many years. He truly feels his body once more made even more amplified by the occasional accidental meditation practice in his campus office. He even feels an instantaneous warmth in his heart, whether its cause is his liberation or roommate.

But as Emily Dickinson once prophesied, “the heart wants what it wants – or it does not care,” and the circulation between the conscious and unconscious mind and heart and arousal whispers only one thing.

Will.

He still does not know whether it whispered his becoming or the man himself.

But to offer sexual passion to a man his trust constantly and intuitively vacillates toward would be a disaster. To be a roommate should be and *is* enough.

But to be an observer to Will’s beautifully warring chrysalis and transformation is difficult, without the occasional baser emotions getting in the way as they sometimes are wont to do. He never blames or criticizes himself for this long-held habit but is amused with this perfect and never-ending inconsistency.

He reclines into the couch, resting the crease of his neck on the cushioned ledge.

Chopin’s Nocturne Op. 15 No. 3 descends into silence, his oceanic Op. 27 No. 1 rolling through the record player’s speakers. Its current runs thick around his body, and the melody breathes into his face, the sodium thiopental gradually taking its poetic grip on physiology before full effect.

There is no doubt he has been in love with Will’s sense of justice. It has always been a curious feature to watch throughout the years, feeling arousal in his mind and soul, which holds a sanctity of disassociation through traumas long-buried and padlocked. He has casually meditated on what the world must look like through Will’s compassionate eyes many times over these past five years, and the cat and mouse demeanor incessantly wilts every time; that sparking challenge of friendship helplessly erupting through serotonin.

But he never expected the causality of his infatuation and Will’s inner beauty to wildly blossom and blur these kinds of stalemates. He will *not* be the one to break and especially with sodium thiopental in his system.

He feels the wet lining of his lips dry, taking a sip of water. He leans back and meets with the chair cushion, lethargic eyelids slowly yielding to a deep gold shining through the thin material.

He closes his eyes.

‘Aaand we’re off,’ Will affectionately teases from the other side of the room.

‘Please, Will, do not patronize me,’ he chuckles, grinning through his half-acidic words.

He taps the audio icon.

“We have all the time in the world,” he hears his voice through the iPad lose a touch of pretense, the finery sharp behind closed eyes and objectivity jolting a gentler lightning bolt beneath his skin. “I am in no rush unless you are.”

“Please, not tonight, Hannibal. I don’t feel like fighting.”

“I honestly did not realize that a provocation, Will,” his apologetic chuckle sings deeper through the iPad speakers, the gentle sigh of settling deeper into his chair. Arthur Rubenstein playing Chopin sounds like a faint background melody. “So, we agree that words shall *not* pass from our mouths for the time being.”

Natural white noise buzzes even louder, Chopin’s more decisive Nocturne in D Flat Major, Op. 27 No. 2 , intermingling forcefully bittersweet through the iPad’s speakers. He smirks behind closed eyes, remembering opening them to a faint smile across the table.

Will’s soft, charming face appears even softer against the sodium thiopental, a slow blur of sun-kissed dark brown curls nodding and accepting his words.

“Tell me, Will, what *was* your intention behind this session?”

One side of his lips smiles higher than the other, and the room swells as if in response.

“Poetic justice?”

“I had th-thought o-of th-that...” Will’s soft, civilized New Orleanian accent shakes self-consciously through the audio’s light buzz, Rubenstein’s playing a gradual crescendo, “And perhaps wondering if the lack of conversation between us lately would change. I-if you..."

"If you would..." he breathes deeply, thoughtfully drawing out his words as they become more dominant in one speaker than the other, " *shed* some proverbial skin or open up a barricade I have not yet found in you.”

He chuckles louder.

“The release of the American “comfort zone,” Will?”

“The endless search for the hurt child within biological or conditioned chaos?”

“Oh, quit it, Hannibal,” he hears Will’s voice draw out through the iPad, and goosebumps rise whether from his beautiful audacity or accent made secondhand.

His chuckle grumbles louder from inside one speaker.

“It’s more than that. It feels like you have or are closed off to me lately, whether through your, ah...”

Will delicately clears his throat.

“C-Commodoro Rivadavian excursion or something I have or have not done.”

He feels the back of his neck linking with the top of the chair cushion, restraining himself from teasing Will about his probable jealousy. But he has already provoked the boy enough tonight.

A hum signals capitulation, and he reaches for the buttons that are already loose at his throat. But this is the rural world, and he wears freer tailored suits and linen shirts here. One stretched out ankle crosses over the other, a palm brushing down his buttons as if in apology to himself or his clothes.

Frycek's Op. 32 No. 1 dance intricate runs and melodies through the air, their crescendos and decrescendos almost soothing the reality on either side of this coffee table.

But he also wishes not to provoke any further reality, however truthful it might be. Perhaps being drugged is his penance for this current state they find themselves in even with his history. So, he continues sitting here, wrecked, quiet, unsure what Will wants to hear if not the atypically American confession of shedding a "comfort zone" or "hurt child."

"It has been a whole year as of last week, Will," he hears himself purr louder and alternating through another of Chopin's decisive decrescendos.

He almost rolls his closed eyes at his derivative-sounding infatuation.

"12 months..."

"Indeed..." Will draws out without any sign of defensiveness.

He barely smells protection wafting from that side of the coffee table either. The fisherman perfumes multiple layers of exhaustion over Chopin's intricate impressions somewhere between his swimming senses and closed eyes.

They open, wishing to rely on a better reliable function.

An even blurrier-looking Will relaxes into his grey Bima chair, sitting a cloud of blue plaid on one arm and balancing his chin between his thumb and peace fingers. He blinks, attempting to fix his gaze on that lovely chin riddled with constellations of handsome, overgrown dark brown stubble. The bones in his fingers ache to reach out for it, still.

"12 months..." He remembers smiling, hearing his low purr through the speakers. His pause crinkles against natural ambiance, and Frycek's downward scale rises and falls as if a fish tail oscillating through lake water. "Tonight *does* almost feel like an anniversary of some kind."

The room tilts hard around him.

Chopin's unyielding ocean current breathes even heavier around him; piano keys unashamedly exhaling their friction in his face. They offer no scent but soft reassurance, and perhaps there is a disadvantage to enjoying the physiological effects of what might be too much presence. He closes his eyes with a deeper breath, intending to feel every

uncomfortable second of this, while in poor posture. Will's calmer pensiveness arises through the thicker matrix of smells from across the much longer coffee table.

He senses a quieter risk of an even closer brewing storm.

His eyes blink open, tilting his chin upward and smiling as if correcting himself.

'An anniversary of your glorious becoming.'

Will scoffs, smiling an ironic, but blurry smile towards the fireplace. His complexion thickly stretches in slow motion, and another petal of polite demeanor wilts backward, alive yet lethargic.

It still shivers in his chest.

'An anniversary of my becoming a probable serial killer,' Will huffs, blinking down toward his empty cream dish sitting on the coffee table in front of him. He lifts his heel dressed in dark brown house loafers, applying weight to the ball of his foot. But Will *has* been a repeat offender of crossing his legs up on the coffee table, and he bounces his foot, clearly resisting the itch.

"An anniversary of the life we have now," slowly wafts out of the iPad speakers, as he makes an effort not to show his hand. But he feels every drawn-out syllable a gentle push in that direction.

Eyelashes flicker against the tops of his cheeks.

"And is it everything you imagined, Hannibal?"

He feels compelled to cry at how tenderly yet daring Will speaks these words. But there is something about Will's preoccupation with *his* sense of control. He hears it faintly accusatory in between the lines in the light of Saturday morning. It is another example of Will's new battles with himself, changing and yet not all at the same time.

He has *wanted* Will to transform and perhaps even contract some of the Red Dragon's unabashed righteousness, either through injury or victorious gain. This may even be curiosity without control's advantage. He has never thought of himself as entirely controlling, and more often than not, he finds himself a hypothetical anthropologist.

There is great satisfaction in losing himself within his natural societally inhumane disassociation.

And yet, it is a fine line that is often misinterpreted between amour prope and affirmation - Godlike objectivity and considerate, validating self-healing.

He aches to echo that question back to him.

After all, Will *has* been an equal for some time now, whether he liked it or not.

He draws in a deep, sharp breath, still feeling a faraway electrical charge beneath skin just from listening to the question now manifesting as secondhand.

He licks the drier inner lining of his lips, his throat feeling even more parched. But he does not feel like moving forward and grabbing his water, not wanting to conjure any more lightheadedness. He watches an even blurrier Will instead, his massive matted haze of golden dark-brown curls around a technicolored version of a Gerhard Richter portrait.

His eyes, mouth, and beard stretch inhumanly wide and softer, losing even more focus.

He watches Will nod his head uncomfortably, his elongated blue eyes accepting his words. A sharp, irritated exhale follows.

Meeting obstinacy with obstinance *has* become an accidental habit lately. It practically deafens the white noise between them, waltzing with Chopin's Nocturne in G minor as they slowly fall back into almost ironic compliance.

'I'm so...' Will sighs, shaking his head over to the fireplace, ' *fucking* tired of these stalemates, Hannibal.'

He aches to point out that it takes two parties to tango, despite the slight manifestation of his hand.

"And yet, in spite of all the stalemates, I still sense your complexity, Will...' He smiles warmly across the coffee table. Will takes a comfortably uncomfortable deep breath from inside his warring chrysalis, blinking down to his empty cream dish. 'I still sense it against your anger, your curiosity, your survivor's guilt. What you seek is not inhibition or loosening tongues. You demand honesty when you do not offer your words to the contrary. Shall you put words to whatever it is now?'

It is a provocation, and he hears it even now.

And it is also the sodium thiopental, his loosened tongue and lips even more liberated and almost joyous beneath admission. There is so much he could say but surrender would not and could never be an option, not as long as Will stays silent about his plans for this new life.

Will widens his eyes to the size of curious saucers, his heavily-scented body chemistry stagnant with subdued anger.

Breath flows thicker in and out of his nostrils, soft aromatic impressions losing some subjective influence. He remembers not being able to sense that probable brewing storm but not really caring about resisting lightheadedness.

The capsule has broken up, its powder soaking into his circulation and central nervous system and unshackling William Graham's sanctified "inhibitions."

It is only a matter of time until his tongue completely loosens, his speech losing some of its finery. Part of him is curious about Will's defensive instincts while he is under this influence. He has never spoken, that is, out loud to another person while under this influence before.

Will bounces his foot, the thump on the wood floor barely acute.

“Aaand we’re off?” he hears himself tease, remembering how he closed his eyes, intent on keeping them this way for however long this would take. He is ready for 9 hours of restful sleep, knowing that he will have a good dreamless sleep after whatever this is will be finished.

He shifts deeper into his chair, feeling his senses dreamily skyrocket and wondering if out-of-character body language would silently quench Will’s thirst. Inhibition barely cares to protect itself from another accidental provocation. He does not want to care anymore, and perhaps this is Will’s “Hannibal Lecter underneath his person-suit.”

What lies beneath skin is simply boredom and cerebral solitude always ready for curiosity and fascination for the people who gravitate into his orbit. In the eyes of pure, unadulterated self-awareness, only he can imagine what Bedelia has to say about this.

‘N-no-o...’ he chuckles, observing rather than inciting.

He blinks down to his slanted lap, finding his beige linen pants crinkling like television static and slowly looking back up at an unaffected Will.

He continues to sit there across from him, his lengthened yet soft facial features waiting for some adequate answer, propping his tilted head up with his knuckles.

‘No, I would not expect you to show your hand, Will. Your victorying over the Red Dragon w- *will* take some time in the post-stress effects, but I sha-all stand next to you...’

“Mylimasis...”

His eyelashes rustle, not remembering saying that.

“My dear Will...” he softly rumbles through the iPad speakers, ‘And you shall come out of it even more beautiful and glorious as I have predicted.’

He hears a gentle clap hit skin outside of his closed eyes.

‘H-Han—’

Will unevenly speaks and quickly sniffs, gently humming into the back of his throat.

He wonders what Will can sense in the air between them. He remembers when this once FBI special agent ascertained to know him so well, but his assumption must be a battle won or lost in the interior of his slowly thinning chrysalis. Perhaps this game of cat and mouse should yield to some degree, but right now it is either too convenient or too challenging. He’s far too tired, and caring is completely beyond skin or even expelling body heat.

The beginning chord of Chopin’s Nocturne A flat Major strikes, almost punctuating Will’s silence.

‘H-Hannibal, if you have forgotten, Francis Dolarhyde was *our* victory...’

He smiles even wider but with some control back at Will, feeling a shiver run down his spine, although distrust feels inevitable. Uncertainty sends heated arousal down his stomach and tempts his groin anyway.

‘I believe you are allowing your ego to take over, Dr. Lecter.’

He chuckles, opening his eyes against his better judgment and sitting straighter in his chair. The whole room revolts against him, Frecyk’s intricate runs even more dizzying. He folds an ankle on top of the other knee, slowly sitting his elbows down on the chair arms. The position almost makes him feel like an immigrant surgeon-turned-psychiatrist in The States once more.

‘Hardly...’

“I am and have been an aide to your defense, dear Will.”

“So, a liberated-Hannibal Lecter *can* admit himself as participant than figurehead.”

He smirks, feeling a boost of serotonin just from Will’s beautiful yet calm audacity as he lifts a curious, blurry chin. He could almost get used to living with this promising new version of William Graham despite all feasible fly risks.

He *does* remember Will blinking his bluer, longer eyes. He remembers wanting to walk over to him, even in this altered state, and touch that beautiful wet texture.

“Th-then tell me...” faintly echoes from the iPad’s speakers.

His heart sinks into his stomach.

“I’m as *fucking* exhausted from not talking as you are,” sharply emotes so aggravated, he feels his heart soar against heightened hormones, “The fishermen at the Senguerr lack...”

Will's breath is sharp, the pause almost wildly gesturing into the air.

“Lack a sense of wit and finery.”

He grins back at Will, opening his even more unreliable mouth to echo his ego’s allowance back at him.

His head swims even heavier.

Will looks away with a tiny grin, silently rolling blue clouds up to the Bloodwood beams to indicate unspoken meaning. A long, horizontal chin freckled with irresistible stubble shifts to one side as if in thought.

“I-it’s strange...” thoughtfully muses through the iPad speakers, “B-but I’ve weirdly missed you for these last few months.”

“Co-dep-p-pendence, Will?”

“Speak for yourself!” Will responds so derisively, a laugh bursts right out of the depths of his chest.

Will laughs and looks back at him, completely unguarded.

He turns the volume down around that beautiful sound and realizes he is smiling. The back of his neck falls back down onto the couch’s ledge. He hears Chopin, or rather, Arthur Rubenstein, quietly lift into another octave, feeling a growing discomfort ebbing beneath his skin.

He *does* remember endorphins starting to slide into their glands, shivering and acknowledging skin sensing every inch of soft, linen clothes just from that spark between them. The Zabaglione still rides faintly sweet on his taste buds and throat, Will’s underwhelming aftershave and custard-tasting breath weaving in and out of his nasopharynx. It is lovely but infuriating, and he wants to drown in this... this much preferable death than Will pushing them off the cliff.

“I, too, have missed this...” he hears himself whisper through the iPad speakers.

He turns the volume back up from behind closed eyes.

“If you choose to believe it.”

“Yes, tha-that pesky thing between us some people prefer to call trust.”

“You do not trust me, Will?”

“And do you, me?”

A sweeping melody lands on its final chord, and the room falls quiet.

The loud static of the record crackles through iPad speakers, the surrounding silence as uncomfortable as it had been when experienced.

“J-just,” Will slowly draws out, his irritated voice moving from one speaker to the other, “talk about something, Hannibal, anything!”

A chuckle pulses from a distance.

“So, this is not a more per-per-persuasive session then?” he tries to chuckle but fails, his voice shaking and cracking of its own accord.

“ *I* do not get as strong of a kick out of manipulating another person’s mind even if they deserve it.”

“Wh-why save me, Hannibal?” Will’s voice shakes even louder as if he leans toward his iPad sitting on the coffee table. “You would have had me out of the way if you left me there. I would have remained as silent as a suicide attacker even as I would have died...”

“Li-like *hell* I would give Jack Crawford the satisfaction,” he grumbles even softer as if moving back into his chair.

He vaguely remembers weakly rolling one hand in the air, reiterating the last of Will’s words as proof as to his reasoning. His palm drops to the chair arm and the whole room swells even heavier, the record crinkling a flat white noise.

“Gr-greater love hath no m-man than this, that a man l-lay down his life f-for his friends," teases what had been spoken as pure honesty seconds before the Red Dragon attack.

He remembers his heart practically falling down on the coffee table between them, *knowing* Will could smell his love emitting from either source.

“Yes, you...you said that...”

Skin gently slaps skin, and Will’s sigh moves from the right iPad speaker to the left.

“And yet, despite stalemates and what some would call pissy attitudes, I would do it again, Will. You are a dear friend above all of the situations we have found ourselves in.”

“Found...” scoffs louder through both speakers.

“F-found and *curated* , then,” he hears his voice sweetly smile genuinely, correcting himself, “I sa...aved you because th-there is still a *sense* of trust b-between u...us, Will. Trust is as co-complex as Hy-Hydra's many skulls. D-decapitate one, and two more appear. I choose intri...icacy over simplicity, an-and despite your in-inner battles over the la...ast leg of your transfor-formation, Will, I have irrevo...ocable hope.”

He realizes his head nodding along to every frustratingly drawn-out word, believing this was best articulated given the circumstances. It discloses just the right amount of truth for Will *and* discretion on *his* part. A much more aware smirk sinks to neutral after referencing Chiyoh’s description of their patient having that “pissy attitude.”

“An...and do *you* , Will, have ho...ope for us?”

“Ah, ah, Dr. Lecter, *I’m* not the one drugged and on trial.”

They both chuckle.

The air rustles loudly from Will’s end, the record player’s needle lifting from plastic vinyl.

The room becomes even more silent.

“And wh-why a-am I the one on tr-trial? Discre...etion, William?” He chuckles louder against the absence of music.

An orchestra of ambiance responds loudly.

And it continues, deafening.

“I … I … “ Will’s voice defeatedly lifts a little higher and louder against the vociferous quiet. “I suppose isolation. This arrangement we have of us just having meals together isn’t enough for me anymore, Hannibal. I’m ready to be in the same room with you without a fork in my hand."

“Despite the fork’s ability to injure.”

His eyelashes dig into his cheeks, quietly chastising himself.

“Perhaps, bu-but I have no more fight to give *you* , Hannibal.”

He *does* remember a sense of bliss cascading underneath skin, conjuring goose bumps up his back ribs.

“You are st-still in the co...onfines of P-PTSD. We *both* a...are. Trust m-must be earned than o...offered gi-gven what we b-both have be...en th-through.”

“Christ, Hannibal, can you say *one* thing without turning all psychiatrist on me? You don’t even work in that field anymore, Dr. Ivanova.”

A cautious laugh comes out, and Will catches it seconds afterward.

Dead, but relieved silence consumes the iPad speakers.

He feels relief even now as an observer.

He does recall aching to murmur “I love you, Will” in multiple languages *so* many times during this calm, the uncomplicated part of his mind sweetly pulsing underneath intricate webs of conditioned complexity. And perhaps it is coddling to resist saying so. Will knows this from all the ways he has expressed his fondness over the years, even through wider manipulative measures. Will could surely *still* sense their emotionality!

“Tell me a memory of your childhood, Hannibal,” Will whispers in a half-daringly tender voice. The sweetness in his voice is enough to tempt another erection from the memory.

“Lo...ow-hanging fruit mu-much, William?” he chuckles even clearer through the speakers despite the distance between them.

“ *You* never wasted the sodium thiopental on *me* .”

Will *did* have a valid point.

“Fair enough,” he sighs out.

House shoes tap down onto the wood floor, clothes gently shifting against chair fabric.

He does not remember any of this.

“I remember...” rightly chuckles, although it draws out barely like him, “H-holding Mischa’s hand as w-we fed th -the swans on the moat together. I remember her l-laugh, h-her inability

to s-say my name pr-properly...”

He snaps his eyes open, stands, and the iPad falls from his lap.

“Mischa, your si—”

He catches it and turns the audio icon off.

He remembers a few details of what follows, conjuring memories of Paris so long ago when he self-medicated, believing himself as unconsciously condemned as he is now. But it is wise best to think of *these* memories in general, in concepts and fleeting references sparsely spoken to Bedelia. No doubt *she* drew her conclusions, the traitorous bitch possibly believing that he killed his own sister!

That hearth’s flames rise progressively higher through abstraction, daring to crack it all open.

He forcefully extracts the USB, the dull notification sound ringing in his ears.

Will’s iPad gently drops to the table.

He stares at the black half-moon-shaped adapter, uncertain whether to be furious or defeated. He walks across the foyer, choosing ambiguous inevitability as he disappears into his office to start his work for the day.

[Interval I.]

"Tell me about your childhood, Hannibal," Will sweetly speaks so daringly it tugs at his heartstrings.

His tongue grows even drier, feeling the room even heavier around him without Chopin's elegance.

The silence makes him feel like the first time he read Inferno .

Mostly still air moves slower, the end of a corridor narrowing its walls and glaring at him some sense of unconscious, inevitable fate, the tease of a looming Dutch angle. And he does not want to move forward, even as his intrigued adrenaline pulses in gradually slower motion.

But to be frozen, even if self-imposed, in front of Will rages the animal inside him.

Perhaps this may have been what Will wanted all along, to see the Luciferic beast who took part in fighting the Red Dragon in a pliant and perhaps even a conversative state. But the primal rarely speaks but feels and reacts. He knows he would not touch this beautiful blurry boy in front of him, even if Will wishes to see this semblance. To fully and objectively reveal this part of himself would be magnificent poetic justice though.

He chuckles, sitting as still as he can.

'Low-hanging fruit m-much, William?'

'Well, *you* never wasted the sodium thiopental on *me* .'

He feels his head tilt to one side, pursing his lips.

The room swims heavy.

'Fair enough,' he groans, crossing the back of his knee over the other and leaving his hands folded over the front of the chair arms. A gentle sigh of strawberries and custard exhales through the back of his throat, lifting what he hopes is faint panic on his face into the air.

The whole room trembles even heavier and his temples pulse.

'I … I remember...'

Mischa's young laugh peels out.

Soft fibers of bread crumbs.

His young fingertips stretching along with his arms into warm air.

The male swan's offended, nasally honk, loudly flapping its wings in defense.

He sighs a deep sound through the back of his throat.

“Annibah!”

‘H-holding Mischa’s hand as w-we fed th-the swans on the moat together...’ he hears himself shake and draw out from a distance, completely underneath the sodium thiopental’s powers yet feeling apprehension clinging to his Adam’s apple. “I remember her l-laugh, h-her inability to s-say my name pr-properly...”

‘Mischa, your sister...’ Will speaks even more tenderly, and he almost wants to cry from how loving that handsome boy sounds.

"Yes," he responds softly, raising his fist to his lips and clearing his throat.

His mother’s brown dress stained with snowy blood and ash.

That crimson and gold hearth licking in front of him, unable to look away.

A faraway taste in his mouth that satisfies his 8-year-old taste buds.

“🎶 Ein Mannlein steht im Walde ganz still und stumm/Es hat von lauter Purpur ein Mantlein urn/Sagt, wer mag das Mannlein sein... 🎶”

Can’t speak... negaliu kalbėti.

Mischa screaming, running through the snow towards him with Lothar at her heels.

He feels his open, tear-filled eyes shaking, struggling to hold still.

‘I have been there, you know, to your home.’

He slowly guides his fist down, unfolding it on his lap and seeing nothing but an abstract watercolor of itself. He hears a distant sniff exhale from his nostrils as it spreads onto his thigh.

‘I have never been able t-to re-return, n-not even if you asked, Will,’ he sadly smiles across the even longer-feeling coffee table, his tongue heavy in his mouth and words a relentless weight against vocal cords, ‘Too m-much hurt, and far too m-many memories.’

But that boy on the other end is a vaporous image of himself, a blurry blue and brown watercolor worthy of van Gogh’s expressionistic eye.

He fights closing his eyes once more, not wanting to see what the sodium thiopental has in store for him behind closed eyelids. The room whirls unevenly around his pounding head.

Will deserves and yet doesn’t deserve this.

He clears his throat again.

‘N-no doubt, in shambles...’ he attempts to chuckle, mid-stammer, to alleviate the obscene quiet between them while silently chastising Will for not flipping over the Chopin record. ‘It w-was a beautiful place even during its urbanization during my ch-childhood. The estate appeared, a-at least visually, untouched by all th-the progress, ev-even under Russia’s st-stern eye.’

‘It is *still* impressive even with age and decay, a home made for...’

‘M-monsters and vampires, p-perhaps, Will?’ he smiles across the way, knowing Will was heading in this direction anyway.

But this mass of William Graham is too heinous of an image.

He adores every defined edge and curve of that man, and observing a matted almost-resemblance is a sin unto itself if he completely believed in the concept.

‘ *You* said it, not me. I suppose...’ something that looks like his hand lifts toward where Will’s face should be, inching up into his hair, ‘I suppose th-there’s artwork in the basement worthy of a home, made for said monsters and vampires.’

‘I saw...’ rumbles deep out of him, the ends of his lips quirking.

The room roughly tilts to one side, and it almost conjures nausea.

He faintly smells Will's body chemistry tinged with pride. His body shivers against the side effects, relishing in Will's faintly ambiguous acknowledgement, whether in satisfaction or distaste.

‘Ch-Chiyoh showed me the p-picture she took on h-her phone d-despite, what sh-she described, as “her b-better judgment.” I cannot say I am th-thrilled considering y-your ch-choice of victim though, William,” He presses his palms into his lap, gently compensating for movement, “Tha-that animal should rot t-to death, b-but...’

‘Will...’ he chokes out, feeling helpless, thicker tears in his eyes as a smile lifts his face. His cheeks float with their height, his temples even dizzier, ‘I-it was beautiful. Th-thank you. I … I am p-proud of y-you and yet f-f-furious, li-like the many p-p-paradoxes I feel because and for you.’

‘The feeling’s mutual,’ sarcastically wafts across the coffee table.

He smiles once more, silently knowing that Will is smiling right back.

“Annibah!”

Mischa’s messy brown ponytail flips, her blood-stained blue winter coat turning around the foyer partition out of the corner of his eye.

The stale, heavy air barely moves, that insentient pitch-black hallway narrowing even tighter.

Fate glares back at him.

He is so dizzy he feels nauseous, silence lingering for what feels like minutes.

The face of a man covered in blood and feathers turning towards him.

The garlicky phosphorous smell in his nostrils.

Snow-flecked burnt bodies in the helicopter.

Sitting on his garret bed, the needle pushed deeper into his arm.

"Mes turime valgyti arba mirti."

He hears himself shakily and sharply inhale, gripping his thigh even tighter.

His throat clears, and the sound makes him even dizzier.

He wants to recline like before, but something won't let him.

And his hands start to shake.

In spite of all of this, he does not even ask what Will's plans are if he is planning to return to the States. Although it is nice, it is impossible to imagine William Graham traveling back to the States, even as a "silent as a suicide attacker." He is a chameleon, and at his finest when he lives between worlds. He would adapt back into his old self if he returned to The States, to his wife, to his stepson.

Jealousy shivers through him, and he does not like feeling this way.

He *is* allowed to feel jealous!

On the other hand, he practically aches from resisting the temptation to beg this handsome boy not to leave him and forsake *his* probable death penalty. But he also doesn't want Will to see that part of himself, despite the benefits of being vulnerable, fusing them as closer friends and roommates. Will has laid himself bare (although with *some* inducement) so many times. Even as the finest of FBI special agents, the poor boy was unprepared to handle his unleashed vulnerabilities.

'I... uh...' Will's deeper disembodied voice gently snorts, 'I … I feel I'm not doing this right. Why *can't* you share yourself or does that entail the other person in the room manipulating their thoughts?'

'Y-you are not th-the only one with th-the sense of trust trailing o-on habit's coattails, W-Will,' but he hears himself from a distance, either experiencing something out of body or his drawn-out, stuttering *voice* disembodied, however, medicated, 'I-is the self-p-p-preserved animal n-not careful wh-when wounded?'

'I did not realize the self-preserved animal was wounded as it began to live on its own.'

‘S-snow l-leopards are s-solitary an-animals as w-well, Will, on-only c-c-coming together t-to mate.’

He grinds his molars together, holding back a suggestive question that was just too easy and the sodium thiopental burns as if retaliating against the resistance. His head gently shakes on its own.

‘D-did you m-mean th-that though, W-Will?’ slips off surprisingly unguarded, though thick, tongue, and his heavy-feeling cheekbones feel even lighter from his disembodied admission, ‘Sh-shall we shed our le-leopard skins t-to sp-spend more ti-time t-t-together?’

‘W-well, certainly *not* to mate, but yes, Hannibal...' Will chuckles between his words, and a smile follows. ‘I *do* wish to have more time with you, although I quite like this setup. I don’t crave cities and culture as you do, but to get out of this habitual groove every so often would be pleasant.'

He feels his eyebrows lift and his eyelids happily widen.

The room tilts even harder around him, not even knowing what the rest of his face is doing.

‘I... I am gl-glad of that, Will. I had b-been fr-frightened you w-would co-co-come t-to your m-more in-intuitive senses.’

He feels his shoulders even lighter having confessed not as straightforwardly, slightly cringing.

‘Oh, Hannibal...' he sighs out and closes his eyes, a blur of brown nodding down and shaking back up. Will’s stretched-out facial features have been erased from his tanned canvas, and this angers him more than anything.

The Luciferic beast gently rattles its cage.

‘Now that you have me and wrecked me for modern, respectable civilization, there is no turning back. I don’t even know what lays ahead in the coming weeks other than fishing and possibly starting to listen to a podcast on the fall of the Roman Empire. What *would* you have me do?!’

He takes a slow deep breath, resisting, “fall in love with me as deeply as I am with you.”

He wants to sleep.

‘Depends on h-how well written th-the po-podcast is...’ he chuckles, slightly nodding his chin upwards.

The whole room tilts, his temples pounding.

‘S-send it to me...’

Will sarcastically sighs. It is almost impossible not to picture the elaborate eye roll of blue eyes made darker by the sitting room's golden lights, a quick shake of those lovely curls.

'Tell me another happy childhood memory, Hannibal.'

He opens his mouth, unsure of what to say.

That large swan spreading his midnight-dark black wings.

The moat's multicolored dragonflies and lily pads.

Youthful arms and fingertips stretching up into the air to fend off the swan as if a young, unaware Lucifer brandishing his wings, a springtime breeze whistling between his spread fingers.

Mischa's soft, tiny hands held in his over her head as she learned to walk for the first time.

Her pretty face, giggling up at him after swathing the tip of his nose with cold mud.

The dream sketches on his wall as the needle sinks in even deeper.

Can't speak … can't speak.

"ANNIBAH!"

His mother's beautiful, frozen face stilled in death.

The taste of exploded phosphorous.

Mischa standing next to Will's chair in her blood-soaked winter coat, smiling her prettiest smile.

Cannon-fire everywhere.

Pressing his face into his mother's snow-covered brown dress, smelling blood and snow.

Clouds of phosphorous blinding him, binoculars hard on his chest.

Negaliu kalbėti... Can't speak...

Fire everywhere.

Neck tendons forcefully ripping, the crunch of vertebrae.

"ANNIBAH!"

His father, exiting out the lodge's front door with his hands up.

"🎶 Sagt, wer mag das Mannlein sein/Das da steht im Walde allein... 🎶"

A soft handprint pressing against his wrist.

“Paimk ją, ji vis tiek mirs. Jis liks šviežias šiek tiek ilgiau.”

Can’t speak … Can’t speak.

What he had eaten without his knowledge.

Fire.

“ANNIBAH!”

“ANNIBAH!”

His mouth is still open, lips uncontrollably shaking.

He closes and opens many times, realizing a familiar yet foreign wet texture on his face.

‘Hannibal, are y-you...?’

‘W-Wi...ill...’ he hears himself from an even greater distance, a gentle panic in the back of his stomach.

Will has seen tears finally appear on his cheeks and he *should* feel humbled.

He shakily wipes down his mouth, clearing his dry throat.

Locked doors within his memory palace stay locked for a reason, their vivid traumas fresh no matter the breadth of years or amount of paid off vengeance. His hands tremble down in the direction of his lap, draping them across the same crossed thigh. He huffs down to his lap once more, realizing even his head shakes on its own.

‘W-Will, th-this was a b-b-bad idea. I … I can’t d-d-do this.’

He stands up.

The entire sitting room violently sways.

‘I c-c-can’t do this...’ comes out even weaker, and his knees are helplessly crumbling beneath him.

Yet something warm wraps around his arms from his right side.

And that warmth smells like Will.

He leans into it, shamelessly breathing in the soft spring sun clinging to his skin and not even caring about his poor choice of aftershave. And yet, its mediocrity is almost heavenly as he breathes it in once more, resisting the instinct to bite into that beautiful neck.

That would have been the animal Will wants to be unleashed.

His tongue gently pulses, wanting to trace that gorgeous jugular softly pulsating worry into his temple.

‘Um, I … I believe you’re smelling me again, Dr. Lector.’

He already traces his nose up Will's beautiful jugular, smelling his divinely calm and placid nerves and circulation’s rhythm spike. The distant-feeling control is wonderful and addictive even while under the influence. He feels close to confessing how much he loves this frustrating man and how much his body suffers for it.

Instinct swallows it all back down.

‘I … I do...on' c-ca...are...’ he gently grumbles into Will’s smooth, soft neck, secretly hoping he is inducing goose bumps up this beautiful boy’s spine, ‘T-take m-me t-t-to bed...’

[Interval II.]

Monday. 19, September 2016

Sometime before Sunrise...

His naked skin becomes aware of silky, soft Egyptian cotton, feeling the softly firm mattress curving and hugging every contour. Deep, pre-sunrise navy blue shines through his closed eyelids, slowly realizing tiny beads of sweat at the intersection where lower back and mattress meet, his groomed, soft stomach hair underneath his palms.

He exhales, his stomach pressing up into his hands.

He wants to bury his lower back even deeper into this divinity.

He shifts, and an erection almost flags from the heavenly cool texture against his ass.

A breath moves unevenly, soft arousal shooting through his naked, purged body.

He has felt this sense of eradication since Friday night, the poor sodium thiopental experiment a hot shower on his broader, budding sense of presence, or rather, his post-imprisonment independence. But he continues ahead like he always does, never truly looking back as if Mischa is his Eurydice. Nevertheless, there is a faint temptation to reminisce about memories made even more hallucinatory, wondering whether time has cleared up or distorted experience. It all is but retrospective hindsight, what Arthur Conan Doyle once wrote, "it is easy to be wise after the event."

'Well, how about that?'

He blinks his eyes open at that beautiful, soft New Orleanian accent.

He turns, and Egyptian cotton hums underneath his head.

Will lays next to him, staring up at the ceiling.

He gently swallows, his midnight-blue silhouetted Adam's apple delicately bobbing. The curves of his lips click apart, and the slightly blared tip of his wet tongue glistens in the darkness, retreating down into his mouth with a gentle clack.

Will huffs a deep, contented sigh into the air, his bare chest sinking.

'Hannibal Lecter *can* lose control.'

He deeply chuckles.

'Yes, I suppose so, but do you, Will—'

Will breathes sharply, summoning an orchestra of rustling cotton.

Warm, naked skin presses his side. Will's calm breath is cool against his shoulder, the gentle curve of his stomach wafting against his hip. Another beautiful but softly corrugated curvature hugs the outer shape of his thigh, gradually hardening.

He cannot hide the smile already on his face.

The mattress bends beneath him, realizing a hot inner thigh meeting his opposite hip.

Their worn-out phalluses brush one another.

Electricity jolts his entire body.

He arches the back of his head deeper into the pillow with a shaky deep breath, stretching his spine out on the supple, firm mattress's docile ocean. His inhale captures Will's divine, dry sweat clinging to his pulse points, gradually draining circulation traveling further south.

'Do *you* , Will, possess a similar hunger...'

Despite knowing Will so well, he refrains from adding on a "yet" to the question, anticipating mistranslation and being accused of assuming his preferences.

Will leans in, dropping his forehead onto his.

He smells that divinely mediocre aftershave, soft, firm bristly stubble scratching his face, the weight of soft, firm, naked muscles pressing him down.

His eyelids close, smelling Will's warm cheeks.

The nostrils above him blow cool, faintly toothpaste-scented breath against his face.

He can feel Will's sanctified mouth click open almost on top of his, smelling of wet and throat and toothpaste. A note of garlic fleetingly drifts by.

A shiver runs through him, and heat swells him silently erect.

Will sighs all of his scents against him. He opens his mouth, lifting to meet those beautiful lips above him, but they retreat and drop to his Adam's apple.

He still hears them wetly open, unable to restrain the shiver running down his back ribs.

His gaze narrows, wanting to lose himself, and yet, he also wants to watch Will and what he is capable of.

And something sharp bites into his throat, tearing his neck open.

He lifts his hand into Will's long, soft curls on the back of his head, kicking with some resistance. He stares at the dark blue ceiling and its near-black wood beams, powerless and still aroused.

Something else pierces his throat and rips his larynx open.

A broken noise falls from his lips.

Blood pools in the goblet of his clavicle, sending his entire body into shock.

He stares at the ceiling, shaking and feeling an ocean of blood loss dripping down between the texture of their intersecting, bare chests.

A shiver runs down his trembling spine.

His lips round, trying to speak Will's name as he grips his curls even tighter.

He blinks once, then twice, almost losing consciousness.

He opens his eyes, finding a beautifully shadowed naked Will drawing back up and sitting on his lower stomach.

His eyes are closed and tinted in the pre-sunrise dark blue, enraptured as his equally shadowed blood-stained lips openly chew a larger-than-usual bite. Black-tinted blood falls from that handsome mouth and drips onto his face...

Between his still-rounded lips, unable to speak Will's name...

Blinds his deteriorating eyesight...

And even this is preferable to Will pushing them off the cliff.

He feels his fingers losing their grip on those majestic long, brown curls, and he is the only one falling this time. He is alone and falling...

And falling...

And falling...

He opens his eyes, surrounded by that blue-indigo darkness. In spite of the dream, he is not too surprised to wake up alone, quietly scanning his body for signs of stress. Inevitable goosebumps ripple across naked skin, muscles hum and brim with arousal and, perhaps, a touch of worry.

One of the lagos lets out an earthy sigh through an open window, whispering a soft thread through the chest hair and perking already stimulated nipples and playing across goosebump peaks. It almost compensates for physical touch.

He closes his eyes with a hum, reaching into his pyjama pants to relive the dreamier aesthetics.

Chapter 5

Friday. 14, October 2016

7:15 pm.

The Sopa de veduras runs confidently down his throat, avoiding looking back at Will.

Will quietly hums, releasing the spoon from his mouth.

He chews slowly, relishing the taste watching neck tendons and his Adam's apple waltz and pulse underneath pale skin.

Will hums a soft approval, but he cannot persuade himself to entirely look across the table.

He lifts his chin, glancing over Will's shoulder and noting the appetizer lying in wait in the oven. It is the greatest masterpiece he has made in *this* life, partly from intuition and a recipe offered to him at the farmer's market.

Cauliflower, carrots, onion, spinach...

Perhaps Will will even notice the frozen chorizo curated for tonight's empanadas.

He could not care less about the probable storm, however unsurprised. He even looks forward to it, hoping to see how Will manifests himself and how he has developed since his last fit of divinely erotic rage.

Discretion prickles goosebumps, and he feels even younger, either from the excitement or secret knowledge or having regained it all after three years.

The addition of chorizo and a few more courses than usual does not feel like a petulant ploy, rather, one that shifts him in a direction that feels most like his preferred Luciferic version of himself. It is alignment and power at the root of it all. Power intermingled with even more amplified senses and this majestic almost-sexual awareness of heightened presence.

He is entirely in a room that he has not constructed within his mind palace.

He has access to people of intellectual and sexual interest once again, alongside the Castillos and Will.

He even feels a small part of himself on a constant precipice of divine arousal, considering every element of all this beautiful country has to offer. At least it attempts to interrupt this recent tendency toward coddling the poor boy.

He resists smirking.

Those blue eyes which have known him so well carefully watches him.

He scoops a hearty spoonful of asparagus and artichoke.

He managed to successfully shake off the past weekend, although its haunting lingers at a slowly increasing distance. He is not much for grandiose overestimation, but its memory springs up upon the occasional uneasy sensation or when he sits exceptionally still. He has not meditated much over the past week mostly for this reason, admitting embarrassment and humility.

It *is* appropriate, although exaggeration's faraway abstraction persists in taunting him as well, reminding him of the human shell surrounding his soul and the occasional vulnerability that rises from it. The last time he has felt that vulnerable was in Mason Verger's pigpens, naked and forced into that primal animal underneath intuition.

But it is faultless to be exposed in front of a roommate one respects.

Discretion's lingering fireworks slowly die down underneath skin.

Sweet and smoky paprika-seasoned broth runs down warm and smooth, feeling a surge of serenity negating all of his unguarded emotions.

He breathes inward, sitting his spoon down and attentive to all the flavors on his tongue floating through his nasopharynx.

It seems the roles have been reversed; *he* is now the quiet party and Will the reluctant pursuer of conversation. And yet, that could not have been the boy's plan in the long run.

Even in a moment of gross overestimation, he knows there had to have been no long-term intention, only a simple quest to re-identify that primitive animal in a quiet moment and the attempt to transition him into predictable archetypes of trauma-induced reactive behavior. Will, at last, has had his moment in the sun, proclaiming a little redirected narcissism for himself.

He finds no internal pride in observing this but the objectivity surrounding it, his forever curse of anthropologist.

He breaks off a piece of freshly baked Chipa bread, drizzling a bit of broth on top.

A faint breeze wafts through the cracked dining room window, the combination of the sweet and earthy broth and dark grapes softly swimming through the air. The empanada's steadily frying crust blows a gentle suggestion through the partition, and the candle flames dance as they stand as if a rampart between them.

He closes his eyes and chases the sweet and smoky flavor made chewy with a sip of Syrah, its arid, deep flavor countering the earthy, vegetal taste on his tongue.

He leans slightly back in his usual chair with his back to the sitting room.

The sitting room where it all happened.

Where a hallucination of a smiling bloodied Mischa quickly disappeared and reappeared.

Her wordless, safe yet cautious smile on that lovely, round face still looked the same despite the blood on her ice blue winter coat and the dirt on her black skirt and shoes, her long, dirty, knotted mousy brown hair half out of her ponytail and tumbling down past her shoulders. She looks as she did before...

Before.

He takes another sip, closing his eyes.

Her specter haunts him more than his conduct, still leaving him with a faintly out-of-body surprised impression underneath skin as it continues to hover above his shoulder slopes.

It even tempts him to cry.

Those mind palace door padlocks jerk and twitch, whether in the name of trauma or victory or perhaps even both at the same time, no matter the dreams and that fine line between justice done in her honor or *his* peace of mind.

“I … uh...”

He feels his eyes widen, surprised at Will’s voice.

Will pops a piece of broth-soaked bread into his mouth, blinking down at the remains on his soup plate. He focuses on the slight sheepishness decorating the soft angles of his face, that face he used to dream of, instead of into Will’s pupils as *he* would have done just last week.

They have barely spoken, save for a little small talk, since the incident.

“I …”

Will blinks, slowly sitting back up rather confidently.

He mindfully swallows his morsel, his paler Adam’s apple and neck tendons assertively flexing.

“I have news.”

He slightly quirks an eyebrow.

“A-a few fishermen down from Caleta Olivia is talking about establishing a kind of Farm-to-Table f-for the local impoverished...” Will nervously gestures his spoon in the air, gently emanating a beautiful beam of light off his tanned face and, by proxy, tinting the deep brown brush of his thicker beard even darker.

Will inelegantly drops his spoon into the soup, capturing a collage of green vegetables.

It slides into his mouth.

A more tactile mouth that never tore his throat open.

“Their five-year plan *will* slowly open up to homeless communities and shelters...” Will quietly smiles to himself, glancing down and carefully pressing his cloth napkin to his chin.

He looks up from his task, and the warmth on his face gently radiates between the pillar candles.

He can almost feel it as well, a little heat under his microscopic smile catching its contagion.

Will’s spoon sits back down in the bowl.

The handle softly clinks down against the edge.

“B-but they *have* asked..." Will sheepishly grits his teeth down to his soup, raising his dark eyebrows and thoughtfully rests the spoon down onto the serving plate underneath.

A smirk slightly ruffles the inner lining of his lips.

“Whom they nickname the Caballero Pescador if he would do more than just contribute...”

“Believing the Caballero Pescador has the Argentine Pesos,” he affectionately teases, gesturing another broth-stained piece of bread in the air.

He pops it into his mouth, carefully rotating its grains on his tongue.

Will rolls his eyes with a good-natured huff, shaking his head back down to his second course.

“B-but as of *today* ...”

Will gently rips off a piece of Chipa.

He feels the violence in his thighs.

Will places the drier hunk between his lips.

“The Caballero Pescador has agreed to be a silent partner for, ah, personal reasons,” he continues chewing, smiling knowingly across the table. A secretive spark in his blue eyes makes him look so much like the old, occasionally coy and dry Will Graham he feels his body ache with nostalgia. “And *will* be having dinner with the more active partners next Tuesday night. So...”

“How much should I wire you, Will?” he warmly smiles across the table.

Will blinks, angrily staring back at him in disbelief.

“Wh-what? N-no...”

He feels his straight posture stiffen against the back of the chair, a small part of himself retreating practically alongside his spine. But he should be used to this by now.

Surprise inevitably permeates the most tranquil, genial calm between them until Will throws an emotional grenade. And he inexplicably falls off his precipice every time. And yet, considering Will's subjective struggles within his chrysalis, even *this* is inevitable. It feels almost like the price he is paying for his looser grip on Will's marionette strings, compromising his movements.

He almost holds his breath, tempted to clutch those strings even harder as if Will is about to make his future apparent.

A future that does not include him.

"Damn it, Hannibal. I don't want your *fucking* ..." Will angrily looks away, forcefully placing his spoon onto the table with a resounding clang.

The arousal in his thighs constricts even tighter, a sigh gently begging for release.

"Money. I wanted to let you *know* that you would be dining alone!"

Will flings himself back into his chair.

"Jesus..." he huffs, shaking his head over to the dining room window.

And yet, he *knows* that Will knows he has a bank account comprised of *his* Argentine Pesos. Or perhaps Will feigns ignorance, taking pride in a nonprofit's goodness wherever the money may come from.

How he loves this man's benevolence.

It repeatedly attempts to burn through his mostly-surrendered ethics of sincere inclusion, his surrounding human flesh ignited by physiological electricity. Will sought out this place often in their past lives together, and he does honor him for that consistent effort and inexorable surrender. But it is a quest not for the faint of heart or stomach, even with or without Will's more hypersensitive abilities.

He takes a sip of Syrah, aware of his ever-present shortcomings, however deliberate.

"I sincerely apologize, Will," he smiles, resisting reaching for his wrist.

Will takes a sharp, deep breath, staring angry into the civil twilight reflecting against his face.

A tiny breeze through the window seems to respond.

The flames on the white pillar candles flicker.

"I am quite proud of this Caballero Pescador..." He graciously smiles, cupping his wine goblet's bowl and lifting it off the table with a Salud.

Will takes another irritated deep breath, half-angrily glancing back at him from the corner of one eye and retreating once more.

“And look forward to his achievements even as a silent partner.”

He sits back into the wooden rails of his chair, drawing his wine glass even closer to his chest.

“Perhaps I *will* have dinner in Comodoro Rivadavia next Tuesday,” he thinks out loud, sniffing the tenaciously masculine Syrah and allowing its full-bodied dark grape determination to slide decisively down his throat.

He contemplates Señor Castillo, or rather, (with his persistent urging) Sebastian’s dinner invitation from earlier in the week. The attractive late 30-something ardently insisted between his lovely, hooded brown eyes and reciprocating Borges and Gelman quotes, matching him wit for wit in Latin American Spanish, a different yet respectful and carnal electricity dancing between them. It holds promise.

He finds himself tempted further when Sebastian points out the dinner invitation would be private as Señora Castillo is in Puerto Madryn on a month-long lecture series. He can only imagine where the invitation would lead, not hating the possible result.

He remembers the taste of Sebastian’s sweat running down his warm, brown spine, as the handsome slim man slowly aligned himself inside his wife. And he takes advantage of this, entering his beautiful cavern a second later while gingerly stroking one of Mrs. Castillo's breasts.

A hot, broken gasp down into Sebastian’s wife’s passionate kiss is just as promising of an incentive.

Invisible television static crinkles through him and causes more purposeful arousal, making him feel even more like the apathetic, powerful version of himself.

He slowly breathes inward and looks into the kitchen, realizing the empanadas are minutes away from being taken out of the oven and the half-petulant two more courses to follow. He chose this not to punish Will’s superiority, but rather to impart awareness of where their dynamic should be now.

He has almost missed this version of himself, however detached and alone but never lonely.

Will carefully opens his mouth with a delicate click and quietly sighs.

A not-quite-innocuous glance out of the corner of his eye glances back at him.

Will turns and blinks back down to his soup, pinching the ends of his mouth, and reaches a practiced, golden hand for his wine goblet. He lifts the edge to his lips, and the sip turns into a steady mouthful.

And he cannot help but stare at the flurry of piano wires working underneath that beautiful neck.

That beautiful neck he faintly remembers smelling.

“Hannibal...”

He sits even taller, raising his chin.

“ *Can* we keep doing this?”

He breathes, attempting to maintain some imperviousness. Despite his uncertainty about Will's likely flight, as a distant ebb of nervousness flows through his lungs. An energetic symmetry waltzes through his veins, prompting him to sit even straighter in his chair if he could.

He unflinchingly blinks over at Will, roughly tearing off a small piece of Chipa.

A quiet, hot surge of alignment runs through him.

He silently observes the grains loosening on his tongue.

“Do *you* think we can keep doing this?”

Will huffs down to the last of his soup, glaring brighter blue eyes back up at him.

“I thought we had moved on from that kind of rhetoric, Dr. Lecter...”

An erection gently swells underneath his napkin just from Will sarcastically dropping his voice even lower and slowly drawing out his name. A surge of something far more energetic rushes through him; that Luciferic sense positioning him even straighter in his chair, and he feels the stiff, wooden texture through the clothes on his seat and back.

The dreamy combination of soup and wine exhales a heady breath through the air, the empanadas’ crust smelling as if a crunch itself against the slight breeze through the window.

He smiles, despite all circumstances.

“I know it is a great ask to put all in the past in the past...”

“And yet the past dictates our n—”

The oven timer shrills, and Will almost jumps out of his skin.

“Ah...” he smirks and slowly stands, habitually smoothing down the buttons of his linen shirt.

He also knows where this conversation will lead and does not wish to stew in the polarization of States-side and Puritanical-bred perceived time and reactionary behavior.

“Now, this, Will...”

He leaves his chair and walks around the table, feeling almost like a boy. He restrains a slight hop in his step, and his softer clothes breathe even more freely across naked skin.

“ *This* you will like,” he attempts to restrain the enthusiasm rising in his throat.

“Should I inquire after the procured who?”

He walks through the kitchen’s doorframe, grinning to himself, choosing not to dignify that with an answer.

“🎶 I opened my eyes/And watched the sunshine/It had been out all night/To relax and unwind... 🎶”

He brings dessert into the sitting room, feeling as if he has stepped into a cozy, plaintive sun.

The solemn tune and the young man's warm, small voice accompany the harmonizers as they sing of accepted sadness. He feels rooted in another kind of blessed uncertainty, and it sweetly wafts like a late American summer’s waning heat.

And he smiles.

It warms his heart to discover Will's varied yet consistent taste, a faint smile lingering on his face rather than lips. His grounded, old bones are even toastier with the unfamiliar song's secondhand intimacy, adding yet another layer of Will's cultural actuality. He has never stopped being occasionally enamored of the flippant consumerism that built Will Graham into the man he is today.

He walks around Will’s chair with both plates.

A wider smirk spreads across his lips, discovering Will’s foot on the table ledge.

He lays the cloth napkin down in front of him.

Will sits even straighter in his chair, sitting his heel back down onto the floor.

“Postre Balcarce...”

The plate rests on top of the dark blue linen next to Will’s espresso.

Will lifts his eyebrows at the highly decorated slice of the powdered multi-layered brown cake, shining an impressed beam of light up into his face.

“A layered sponge cake alternating with almond paste, dulce de leche, meringue, walnuts, and candied chestnuts and gently dusted with powdered sugar and coconut.”

“And *not* ...” Will sardonically grins, tauntingly bursting that growing glow even brighter, "Produced by yours truly.”

He graciously nods, smirking directly into angled-up, luminescent cerulean eyes.

“You are unfortunately correct, Will.”

He takes a pause, then walks the length of the coffee table.

“I enjoy baking...” he nonchalantly speaks so brightly with his back turned, it is almost as if both the last weekend and the past year had never happened both in mind and body, “But there *are* things under the sun best left to the experts...”

He sinks into his chair with a grin, leaning forward as if in slight discretion.

“I could not *possibly* do this justice,” he chuckles to himself, sitting back in his chair with plate in hand.

His fork plunges into the multi-textured layers with ease.

A shiver runs up his spine, silently relishing in the crunch.

“I have been looking forward to this all day,” he smiles, biting into the forkful.

And it is every bit as heavenly as it looked in the glass case this afternoon.

He closes his eyes, tasting the caramelized milk and the earthy and gently crisped mixture of lightly baked nuts, every note of gently textured flour a divine pillowed scent trailing through his nasopharynx.

“🎶 I lay down on the grass/And let the insects do their thing... 🎶”

He opens his eyes and shuffles forward, watching himself sit the plate down, delicately sighing a breath that nearly disrupts the Postre Balcarce’s magic as he attempts to relish the caramel aftertaste for as long as possible.

But a glass of water sits beside his slowly cooling espresso, the wood coaster underneath it also displaying a familiar small, white pill.

The rather oceanic, gentle reminder surges through him, despite his discomfort with the more human theatrics of interacting with someone who is unable to comply with polite manners. And yet, he feels almost complimented that Will continues persistently although ill-advised.

His sixteen-year-old eyes groggily open on the stained popcorn ceiling—

He reaches for his plate, thankfully stopping the unfolding memory.

Fork points quietly clink against porcelain.

His dessert plate slides across the backs of his knuckles, cradling its base.

Will deeply hums.

“🎶 She covered me with wings and/Held my head and said ‘poor thing...’ 🎶”

He blinks across the coffee table, uncertain of how uncomfortable he should be.

“Success...” he softly breathes, lifting his chin in the air and feeling a soft smile dancing in his eyes in playing with Bernard Shaw’s words, “does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a *second* time.”

“And yet...”

“🎶Waves will crush the junk that I have saved/When the moon explodes or floats away... 🎶”

Will holds the fork handle in front of his faint, considerate smile as it flashes into wry oceanic-tinted eyes as he chews.

“A person who never made a mistake *never* tried anything new,” the boy radiates mockingly, Einstein's quotation rhetorically landing in the air between them.

He whole-heartedly grins.

And it feels as if they are in his Baltimore office mentally pursuing one another once more. This is the William Graham he has missed over the past year. The William Graham he carefully studied and placed in delicate scenarios to better himself. The William Graham, with his razor-sharp wit he genuinely knew he could mold into something extraordinary. The William Graham whose brilliant mind could accomplish so much more if he allowed himself to do so.

But a decent percentage of the human race tends to never learn from their discourtesies, no matter the amount of love a person has for another. It is a human inherency and one he knows for himself that he has risen above many times in the past. He had hoped Will could have been different, and yet, his *own* inherencies could not help but clumsily drag an unconscious Graham onto the shoreline as Chiyoh steered his trawler even closer to the shore. His instincts have always yearned for Will, continually hoping to be proven wrong only to be repeatedly disappointed.

“I … I noticed...” Will speaks louder than expected, narrowing his gaze.

He bites into another forkful.

“You looked *so* nervous and yet natural popping that pill last weekend...”

He feels his chin lift into the air, restraining an instinctive grimace.

“Almost as if you had almost done it before...”

A quiet breath wafts outward, conjuring a magnificent caramel-y breeze through the back of his throat.

“What would you like me to say, Will? The inducement? Method? The time and place?” comes out careful and perhaps even punctilious to the possibility of being mistranslated. But then, recent spontaneous emotional explosions have unfortunately or fortunately become a habit.

“🎶 I was the one who loved you most/But you can’t put your arms around a ghost ... 🎶”

Will takes another bite, staring down at his dessert.

“Well, if you’re going to be like *that* ,” he breathes sharply between bites, raising his eyebrows down to his large slice of powdered pastry, “Then I *guess* I hope to strive for something a little more...”

He shakes his head, glancing back up, and gestures his fork as if trying to evoke the right words.

“Prevalent, I suppose. *Was* it a horrible experience at the time?”

“Yes...” naturally slides out.

“And yet also illuminating,” he casually blinks down to his plate, bringing the ball into his court.

“🎶Some sweet day you will be mine, you’ll be mine/Some sweet day you will be mine, you’ll be mine... 🎶”

“How old were you?”

“16.”

“Christ...” Will chuckles with a soft snort, raising his eyebrows and shaking his head towards his occupied hands. He quietly scoffs a small smile, surprising himself. “ *I’m* having a hard time imagining a 16-year-old Hannibal Lecter without my profiler-mind turning on.”

And everything feels as it should have been.

The way his instincts told him to act when he laid Will's unconscious body on the trawler's floor and resuscitated him, not even caring about his own broken bones. Will would live from the causality of his lips and breath. Will *will* finally escape with him even after all these years of rejection and friendship, of cat and mouse proclivities. And he does not care about anything else other than his heart practically bleeding down onto Will’s bare chest, uncaring of his Lover status or Will’s reciprocity or “pissy attitudes.”

Will set his half-finished Postre Balcarce down with a soft tap.

“Hannibal...” he asserts with beautifully prodding eyes, blindly taking up his demitasse of espresso, “You *have* to let me in somehow. I don’t want things to continue on like this, although I *do* appreciate your giving me some space to process everything...”

“🎶Where did you go, up to the sun?/Where are you now, part of the sea in every drop/Or did you simply stop? 🎶”

Will reclines into the small, grey armchair, shaking his head in equal frustration.

He sips his coffee, his gently tanned Adam’s apple ebbing and flowing underneath a dwindling shoreline of thick stubble. Faint, faraway embarrassment reminds him he has nosed that beautiful neck, that strangely majestic yet underwhelming aftershave and cologne *did* waltz up his nostrils.

“Unexpressed...” Will huffs to himself, quietly chuckling down to his cake, “Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and *will* come forth later in uglier ways.”

“Again, low hanging fruit, Will?” he smirks, silently delighting in his reference to Freud.

Will huffs, rolling his bright blue eyes up to the Bloodwood beams.

And *he* cannot stop smiling even if he wanted to.

“I do not *deny* the benefits of expression, Will...” He pauses, crossing one knee over the other and realizing faint arousal, “But consider the injured animal’s self-preservation returning to trust or, rather, in this case, *two* injured creatures.”

“Yes, you...” Will slowly breathes, sitting his demitasse on the coaster and blindly picking up his plate once more. His full eyelashes narrow around gently insisting pupils, “Y-you said that last weekend as well, that is, if you even remember saying it.”

He chooses silence, not wishing to open an American can of worms.

He is exhausted, having spent most of the afternoon sitting in his office working on acquisition forms and trying to forget having run into Sebastian after a luncheon meeting with the museum staff.

The beautiful, young man looked him up and down so cleverly enamored, a far bodily arousal blossomed through him, which he had cared for when he finally got back to his office. He spent the entire endeavor wishing he brought that gorgeous, openly married man back with him, although happily imagining the things he could do to that gifted mouth.

The steady, almost-American country music seems to rise in volume.

And the silence between them, deafening.

“But if I know *you* at all...” Will chuckles, flashing a jarring blue insistence as he bites into another forkful. "You didn’t even finish listening to it. *I* think you would learn a few things about yourself if you had.”

“🎶 Sometimes I just won’t go/Sometimes I can’t say ‘no’ … 🎶”

“What exactly do you wish to accomplish with this whole...” he gestures down towards this exhibition displayed on the extra wooden coaster, “Experiment, Will?”

“🎶 It’s a sad and beautiful world/It’s a sad and beautiful world... 🎶”

“To...” Will takes a slow, deep breath, uncomfortably blinking over to the lifeless fireplace.

Though a faint shock stings skin at the memory of blurrier movement, Will's sharp features, bright eyes, and dark beard remain dimensional and stagnant.

Will gently swallows, the profile of his Adam’s apple bobbing.

A tiny pink streak slowly blossoms underneath sharply focused stubble, shining through beautifully shaded chiaroscuro of sun-kissed skin and thicker brown beard perfectly aligning with his strong jaw.

Attraction humbly flows down to his groin.

Will's lips delicately click apart, dry.

“I …” He lifts dark, exasperated eyebrows onto his smooth, tanned forehead, shaking his long curls with a scoff. Humbler pupils turn to face him, “I *suppose* , to prove the voice in my head wrong.”

He blinks, laughing blue eyes half-hardening.

“And it is *not* yours if that is what you are wondering.”

“Tell me," he whispers from the depths of his vocal cords, feeling a small fragment of himself shuffling closer towards some variation of surrender.

“🎶 A necklace of leaves/Spirits in the trees/And drown all the clocks ‘til there’s none ... 🎶”

He clears his throat.

A sweet and smoky gust echoes down his esophagus.

“Will...” comes out gently, with unrequited adoration pouring out of the depths of his eyes, “You do *not* have to go through all of your inner chrysalis battles by yourself. I have been but considerate to your feelings, your experiences in the attempt to be better myself.”

“And has it killed you very badly, Hannibal, to be on the outside looking in?” Will carefully flares his nostrils, searching his eyes even with the distance between them. “All of this self-imposed confinement even after all of your prison time?”

He wholeheartedly smirks.

“What you *may* perceive as confinement, Will..." He half-chuckles, sitting his demitasse down while quietly savoring the espresso’s medium-dark roast lingering in his throat, “can *also* be surrendering to either fatal direction of the KM 162.”

The porcelain plate hisses across his fingers to his palm.

He sinks his fork back into the Postre Balcarce, a delicate yearning slowly penetrating through skin.

Fork points pass through the soft grind of walnuts and chestnuts.

He shivers.

“🎶In silver piles of smiles/May all your days be gold, my child … 🎶”

He chews slowly, the caramelized milky-stained sponge and countering crunch sliding down with effortless ease. He closes his eyes and delights in every nuance, every crushing interval delicately rattling his eardrums.

The plate thumps back down.

"But I love this house too much..." he exhales happily, looking up at the ceiling beams and around his medium-lit, minimalist sitting room, as he silently acknowledges the dark shapes of the dining room behind Will's shoulder.

A small part of himself still quietly expects Mischa out of the corner of his eye.

"And I love *having* you in this house, no matter your temperament." He continues to smile, emanating sincere warmth and restraining any sign of desperation. "We *can* start afresh, Will. That has been all I've wanted for the both of us since your battle with the Red Dragon. But, Will..."

He ruffles his eyebrows, teasing the glow already on his face.

One hand cups his crossed knee cap, the other reaching for his demitasse with a soft grunt.

"Is your experiment nothing more than an attempt to lure me into some capacity, Caballero Pescador?" he asks chuckling, lifting the porcelain ledge to his lips, "Endeavoring to sustain some of the cliff's shadow over more focused psychological injuries? Self-denial? I thought you would be happy to have regained some of yourself."

"N-no, I do... b-but... I … I don't know."

He smirks, and it raises a different kind of heat across skin as if he is closer to winning something. He sips his coffee, feeling even more like himself, the victorious mouthful of espresso intermingling with caramel and provoking a roasted sweetness in the back of his throat.

"Can't live with him..." Will mumbles with a groan, sitting his elbows on his knees and bending over until his forehead meets his thumb knuckles. "Can't live without him."

He narrows his eyes, questioning.

"🎶 I'm so sorry/My spirit's rarely in my body/It wanders through the dry country ... 🎶"

"Oh, a-ah..." Will sits back up and reclines back, dismissively waving one hand while retrieving his espresso with the other, "B-Bedelia..."

The affectionate light in his face turns off.

He feels his molars grinding against one another, his entire body freezing.

"🎶 Looking for a good place to rest/Your head upon my chest/And I can feel the pillow of your breast... 🎶"

'We all tend to say things without thinking to Dr. DuMaurier,' he teases directly into Will's progressively awkward stare, with a sardonically relaxed grin on his lips. “Isn’t that the trick often said of psychiatrists?”

“ *She* says you’re in love with me.”

He drifts to the edge of his chair and pops the sodium thiopental, uncaring of Will’s translation.

“ *She* has manipulated causality will lead me to eat you to forgive you.”

Will huffs and rolls his eyes.

“Well, and *that* turned out so well for you, didn’t it?” he chuckles, glaring wounded bullet holes into the mantle and lifting his elbow onto the arm cushion. “Now I know who to *really* blame it on...”

“Hm...” he huffs, quietly amused, glancing up through another sip of espresso, “So much for doctor-patient confidentiality then.”

“Cheers, I suppose...”

He sits back in his chair with a playful smirk, setting his demitasse down.

“And *do* you?”

He quirks the ends of his lips, confused, pretending his heart did not just skip a quick, nervous beat.

“S-still...” Will shifts in his seat and releases his fist from his chin, casting a darker, apathetic blue gaze to the fireplace, “d-desire to eat to forgive?”

“I am not sure...” slips out unexpectedly.

He feels his eyes widen slightly, surprised at himself.

“Oh Will...” sighs out, full of tenderness and exhausting defeat, “I have forgiven you so often in my mind for so many smaller things I have lost count, and yet, it *is* but symbiotic."

“St-still, the *brain* ?!” Will teasingly glares back, although his body chemistry still smells ill at ease.

“Where your delightfully snarky wit resides,” he proudly beams, “Please Will...”

His chin nods, gesturing down to Will’s plate.

“Finish your cake...” he grins warmly at his timely suggestion, lifting his back into his palm. The plate’s harsh porcelain texture glides a silent hiss across the back of his fingers, an invisible awareness twanging in his temples like a well-exercised theremin.

Will carefully watches him, *not* taking his advice.

A reverberating lead guitar resonates through Will's iPad speakers , its charming transposition weaving duality between delicately played oceanic synthesizer keys.

"🎶 I could look into your face/For a thousand years/It's like a civil war/Of pain and of cheer... 🎶"

Will continues to stare.

He meticulously studies him, blindly crossing one knee over the other and resting his bare forearms on the gray arm cushions.

" *I* find it extraordinary how I can know you *so* well and yet hardly know you now..."

He takes another bite of Postre Balcarce, relishing its flavor more thoroughly. The caramelized milk intermingles with the vapor of espresso already coating his throat, and the crunch of walnuts and chestnuts keeps his jaw busy from provocation or worse.

He relaxes into his chair, his linen clothes brushing skin as he continues to hold his plate and fork.

"Humans *can* , after all, Will, be capable of remarkable transformation if or when they allow themselves. Give a person a different setting or cast of characters to stand alongside..."

He gestures the fork's tips into the air, quietly feeling every puzzle piece of Count Dr. Hannibal Lecter VIII M.D. click together within his soul. He sits even straighter, sensing a pure rush of absolute alignment and perhaps a touch of vanity in reciting allegories to Will Graham once more. It feels glorious and yet somewhat different from Baltimore, those egalitarian, unconstrained reigns practically dancing in the air over the coffee table.

"And facets of their identity will flourish like sunflowers, and often en masse. You are in lieu of a major metamorpho—"

"Oh," Will scoffs, angrily wrinkling his nose and averting the fire in his eyes onto the fireplace, " *fucking* stop it with your obsession with chrysalises and so-called "transformations," Hannibal. Haven't you done enough?!"

His chin raises in the air, not entirely retreating but not determined.

He suppresses a soft smile of approval.

"Yes..." Will sighs and drops the knees of his black pants, clearly thinking so hard that the wheels inside his head move across the shadowed surface of his downcast face. "I *do* feel as if I am changing to a different country and among another cast of characters, preferable characters, real, down-to-earth characters..."

And an ensemble that does *not* involve him.

He is *so* sick and tired of jealousy and yet wishes he did not care so much.

But to not care about William Graham would be painful. To not care about the beloved means to silently subdue a self-imposed lover title he has never fully admitted out loud and, at times, even to himself. He has never expected Will Graham to be such a clever boy at times – a kind of Shelleyian quest for the intellectual beloved despite sexually post-millennialist identities continuing to charge forth through all their separate yet mutual endeavors.

And yet, lines blur and love discovers Will beloved in *silence* , but never in secret.

A ride cymbal and snare drum weave around one another like a spider knitting silk, also intertwining around the singer's wishes for his beloved's "shade be sweet" "float[ing] upon the lakes where the sun will be made of honey."

Surprise leaps inside of him, pleased at Will's unexpected wistfulness through his music choices.

"As are *you* with your..." Will gently clears his throat, looking down to reach for his espresso and slowly lifting the demitasse's ledge towards the soft round of his lips. "Comodoro Rivadavian associations as of lately..."

The hair on his raised forearm prickles.

Will sips and his Adam's apple pulses downwards, conjuring a hint of his scent into the air.

He narrows gently dilated cerulean eyes as if in an indecipherable question, lowering the tiny coffee mug from his mouth.

And Will Graham is, as always, the constant liar between the two of them.

"And if I *am* transforming, Hannibal..." he sits it back down, carefully drawing short eyelashes around his shining pupils with a gentle warning, "It is *just* trying to find my place in this house. Wh- *what* ..."

But that shine starts to shake, blinking and averting over both of his shoulders. Will attempts to swallow back the tears already appearing in his eyes, inadvertently flexing neck tendons around that beautiful, tanned Adam's apple.

And a deep pain gently tugs at the recesses of his chest.

"Am *I* doing here?"

He takes a slow, deep breath, preparing himself for another identity crisis, however, warranted. But he feels his fingertips ache to soothe Will's lower lash lines anyway, to trace the paths and mounds underneath that tan, warm neck with his tongue.

"Because I would loathe to lose you, Will..." smiles out of his soul.

"Wh-what is my place in a Hannibal Lecter-sanctioned safe house?"

"Anything you'd like—"

“That *isn’t* antagonistic to the safe house’s rules...” Will mumbles to himself, lifting his elbow onto the arm of the chair and covering his lips with his fist then releasing them.

“I …” he yelps out more like a sound, his lips ajar while lifting his eyebrows and fanning his fingers into the air.

He feels every joint and bone in his fingers throbbing to reach for him.

“I still feel as if I fell into the ocean, but by myself, completely adrift...”

His lips quietly part.

‘Then let me be your buoy,’ suffocates inside his vocal cords, feeling his heart throbbing through his cream-colored linen shirt. He takes the last forkful of Postre Balcarce into his mouth instead, the final bite unfortunately a little more tumultuous.

‘And on which shore would you prefer to be washed upon?’ tightens even deeper in his throat as a beautiful cascading shower of caramelized sponge and nuts brush past his words, not wanting to hear the probable answer that might not include him.

“Would it be preferable to your recent non-profit ventures?”

Will sharply exhales, lifting his chin and annoyingly glaring off into the distance.

Scales of delicate synthesizer notes tumble , heavily leaning at an angle in the air.

This young man’s soft voice emerges, likening his lover’s “face is like the sun sinking into the ocean,” his vocoded harmonies far slower than they had been under the effects of sodium thiopental. They begin to sound rather menacing, nearly mocking in their reminders of who chose this music. And he also would consider Will’s face “like the sun sinking into the ocean/ […] like watching flowers growing in fast motion.”

He levels his chin and forces a tiny smile, resisting acknowledging the true state of his central nervous system even to himself.

“No...”

Will persists in avoiding looking at him, glaring his vulnerable but no less wounded pupils through the window behind his chair.

"No..." he sighs with a strange acceptance, his chest ebbing beneath solid gray buttons, "No, you have your KM 162, and I have routes between rivers and lakes around here. And I am happy doing just that, although sometimes...”

Will rests the boundary of his rolled-up gray sleeve and pale elbow on the grey arm cushion, balancing his fist under his chin. His oceanic blue eyes blink rather mournfully down to his empty plate.

“Sometimes, I *just* want to buy some land next to a river around here and build a comfortable home. Fish to...” his sigh grows louder as he looks to the overhead beams, lifting off of his

knuckles and reclining into his chair, “Trade and the trade into the sin ánimo de lucro? Adopt a few dogs?”

He shakes his head and shrugs his hand in the air.

“M-maybe train a few for others to adopt?”

“Then I shall look forward to overhearing your adventures with your future kennel,” slides out so noncommittal Will could almost accuse him of not caring.

He considers heading to an animal shelter in Comodoro Rivadavia after his lecture on Tuesday.

But gifting Will a dog in this way would be no less than bargaining with a further obligation to stay on the property. As much as he would like Will to be equally committed to being a roommate, he also does not want to be a burden. And despite everything, he *wants* Will here, in his Castillo Lagos Simetricos, because he *chooses* to stay here.

He is already nervously swallowing, gazing into the dark dining room behind Will in the discovery of a little of his hand and perhaps even his heart beginning to show.

Leftover sweetened smoke gently clicks into his eardrums.

“🎶 Slept in a tree that’s gone hollow/And never a brittle wintertime/Baby you are my sunshine... 🎶”

He turns his ankle to lay flush against his linen-covered knee cap.

A glimmer of sodium thiopental sweeps through his skull as if a reminder.

“🎶 My sunshine/Please don’t take my sunshine away... 🎶”

But propriety keeps him from begging.

And Hannibal Lecter does *not* beg, no matter how silently beloved or how long he has known the attractive young man at the other end of this coffee table.

Will already knows.

His empathy is an extraordinary quality, regardless of how often *he* has played with it.

So, perhaps Will has perceived how he has quietly divulged his heart multiple times and that he has broken it often enough. Lecter Castle's ghosts may have left an impression on him, providing newer insights into unspoken and padlocked encumbrances that he cannot and will not ever express.

Trauma-stained rejection is a forever acute curse in this way. Its pain stabs DNA and the soul-ridden pineal gland, leaving him breathless and a terrified, mute eight-year-old once more.

And it is *not* alignment.

And it is not strength once vocal cords shape self-assured words, sending them in the air to be fortunately or unfortunately reciprocated, translated. He does not want to remember or relive such anticipatory pain no matter the success rate once on the other side of this bridge.

Thus, Abigail fell to the floor, bleeding from their love and equal efforts. Absolving rain dripping down his face and closed eyes, attempting to wash away the blossoming bruises developing in his heart and soul before full plumage.

So, cold, gloved palms balanced on his temples, and snow stained his kneecaps, genuinely and slowly turning back to Will in what he perceived as humble integrity, although lightly encrusted with pride.

Francis Dolarhyde's baptismal blood staining their skin a year ago.

He loves this man, with or without lover-beloved status.

A final rejection from Will would surely be suicide, and yet, to communicate this would also be destruction to every part of his already proudly worn bruised body and soul.

"I-is..." He takes a deep breath, realizing his throat is even drier.

He wets his throat, feeling the music-box-like accompaniment weave heavier around his temples.

"Do you really wish this, Will?"

His head dizzies.

"Well, I … I figure..." Will shifts in his chair with even more unease, nervously scratching the back of his wild dark brown curls.

Self-preservation instinctively clutches Will's loosened reigns harder, terrified, even as he rummages through his mind palace file to find other small, light possibilities to punish him with other than longer dinners.

He blinks, almost frightened, casting thinking blue eyes down at the coffee table.

Their turbulence causes even him to feel restless as lethargy starts to weigh him down like a winter coat. And its sensation is glorious. He would rather drown in a pure sleep, no matter how rife with dreams it may be. Even that would be better than being pushed over a cliff by Will.

Will huffs as if cornered, shrugging his hand in the air.

It rests on the arm cushion with a pillowed tap.

"Y-you've been doing this by yourself for so long, an-and..." He softly groans, sitting his elbow back up and massaging up his sun-kissed, bare temple, "y-you must be exhausted of

incessant self-sufficiency."

And despite the sodium thiopental starting to grip his senses, he wants to reach for Will's collar and kiss the boy downright senseless for having said that.

But he resists, seeing an exhausted, older man, full of Dr. DuMaurier-sanctioned attachment issues shining with a youthful and almost hopeful empathy. And there is that beautiful, young empathetic boy he marveled over for the first two years of their platonic courtship. Its light practically shimmers through the thicker brush of his beard and the gently patterned wrinkles, and he falls even more in love with every line and bristle.

Will Graham would never cease to be beautiful and remarkable.

However, a small part of him still sees no other variation of Will in his mind palace than the one he left standing on his Wolf Trap porch. The one who had resigned himself to his kitchen floor. The one who would knowingly smile at him during the FBI cases he assisted in. The one who never married.

Perhaps Will is not the only one with infuriating capitulation issues.

And he studied every moment he allowed his hunter instincts to appear when Will was not looking while in his mind palace for the past three years. He still remembers what Will smells like in all his moods, his slowly evolving body chemistry leaping when he has walked towards or smiled at him. The dilation of his pupils, whether out of joy or platonic arousal from conversation or fear or unknowing desire. He *knows* the effect he has on him *and* vice versa.

However, he has given up on more erotic fantasies.

Most of all, towards Will.

He had psychoanalyzed his dream earlier in the week to a nakedly *vulnerable* Will forcing words out of his mouth in what might be the only acceptable way. And to admit weakness is surrendering a percentage of self, freshly refined senses to a deeper level of self-preservation barely touched by American-perceived "comfort zones" and "hurt child" syndromes. And to lose even more of himself to Will Graham means to die, even if by his hand.

Perhaps he would let Will kill him someday, but not now.

He has finally re-entered the world of Comodoro Rivadavia, and he embraces each second with every recited Michelangelo stanza and slick thrust into Sebastian's beautiful backside.

"D-de...enn ..."

He takes a deep breath and wets his throat, hearing his spit echo in his eardrums. He feels that warm, heavy winter coat hovering inches away from his even more obscenely smooth clothes, the world even further from this beautiful sensation spinning aureoles around his forehead and temples.

A winter coat.

A thumping binocular case bouncing against his winter coat.

“Denn da ist keine St-stelle/die dich nicht sieht. D-du mußt dein L-leben ändern...” he smiles through Rilke’s mother tongue, however heavy his own, fighting back intuitive panic.

But moving the ends of his lips causes the room’s gravitational pull to rapidly swirl.

“For here this is no pl-place/that does n-not see you. Y-you m- *must* change your li-life.”

“And when you have spent most of your adult life by yourself...” Will narrows his darker blue eyes, curiously tilting his head, “does belonging to yourself just end up as a lie you tell yourself to excuse giving your heart to someone else?”

“I *gave* m-my...”

He stops himself, realizing what was about to come out, *and* defensively.

But Will knows.

And he is unashamedly aroused by Will’s audacity all over again.

He inhales, sending faint remnants of espresso and Postre Balcarce down his throat and stabilizing himself even in the surrounding unstable warmth. But he is never one to not finish a sentence once manifested.

He clears his throat, blinking down to change his tone.

The room spins.

“I gave m-my heart t-t-to someone once,” he looks up through his eyelashes, softening a knowing gaze back at Will and feeling the room spinning on a harsher axis.

Will takes a loud, sharp breath, transforming his hardened blue eyes into a softer substance. He sits his arm back down on the chair’s arm, grey and flesh-tinted air starting to move in slow motion.

“I believed it br-broken f-for many years until I exercised K-kintsugi on it in the form of vengeance. And...” He sighs, wanting to resituate his sleeping shin reclining on his knee.

But all movement is, indeed, fruitless.

“And per-perhaps you have helped a little, Will, in r-recent m-months.”

“So, your heart must be entirely made of powdered metal with *your* history.”

“N-not the g-golden boy nor with a heart of p-pure gold.”

“Sounds appropriate,” Will winces his eyebrows, their dark, arched shapes slowly forming into watercolors as they sink towards narrowed, amused blue pools. “ *You* look like the sodium thiopental is having fun with you, Hannibal.”

The beautiful boy mocks him, and he *knows* he walked right into it.

“The first time involved some convincing, but *this* time...” blurry tanned knuckles balance an unfocused cloud of black-brown beard, a curious yet amused spark kindling within lightly constricted blue eyes, “what is your incentive, Hannibal? Evasion? Was it something *I* said?”

“Evasion is b-but an artifice to th-the suffocating voice or in-intuition in all of us, W-Will. The diversion of a di-diversion,” he feels a smile lazily play across his lips, uncaring of his habitual silent denial.

The sitting room slopes even further, tempting a horizon of itself.

“You just...” Will loudly sighs in defeat.

And his face melts, transforming like a Richter portrait.

He closes his eyes, wanting to focus on that lovely voice.

“Y-you still think you have *all* the answers, don’t you?!" Will frustratedly spat out in the air, and even this is a better, more manageable temperament while under the influence.

Nerves happily tingle against his muscles, sensing faraway lust for this budding version of Will Graham.

“Likening yourself to a demi-God again, Chesapeake Ripper?”

He chuckles.

“No, no, Will. J-just a fallen an-angel...”

He presses his eyelashes against his cheeks and grinds his molars, hating how easily that manifested.

“Right...” dryly draws out, unconvinced, “Y-your obsession with Lucifer.”

Eyelashes rustle against cool flesh, shoulder caps sinking with a deep, silent sigh.

“ *I* think...” Will grunts, loud fabric brushing against fabric, and soft thumps of resituating feet tapping down on the rug, “You’ve spent too long with Aligheri while in Florence, Hannibal.”

“Obse...” he pauses, thickly swallowing, taking in a surprisingly deep breath.

But he feels his chin droop down to his chest, and the sitting room thickly swirls.

“Obsession? Oh, Will, I’ve spent m-m-more time with Dante than you th-think, young Durante. H-have I n-not been your V-Virgil this wh-whole time, d-delivering you to th-this transformative moment?”

“Well, I’m glad you have found some moral responsibility in all this?” Will lifts, rhetorically and half-amused, “B-but seriously, Hannibal...”

“ *What* are we doing here?” pleads from the other side of the coffee table, its length feeling even longer and as if in a narrow tunnel.

The end of that insentient hallway barely glares fate but unashamed honesty.

“Who *are* we if we are not playing cat and mouse?”

“I...” he breathes deeply once more, delicately swallowing a dry symphony into his eardrums, “is it not enough just t-to be with one another now as p-p-people despite all that h-has transpired?”

“You look to the future too much,” cynically smiles from Will’s handsome vocal cords.

“And *you* , d-dear Will, see so li-little what th-there i-is in the pr-present.”

“Probably because it’s too anxiety-inducing. Have you *ever* considered *that* , Hannibal?”

“I’m...” Will softly cries more of a sound than a word, then delicately humming a low sigh, “I’m sorry, Hannibal. You *always* ensnare me in traps that divert me from knowing you better.”

“Do you not al-already kn-know me so well...” he chuckles, feeling an airborne tempest rocking his temples with each heavily prolonged syllable.

“Well, the *internet* certainly helps...” Will snorts softly.

The fabric of Will’s clothes shuffles, his feet lightly tapping against the rug.

“But Hannibal, I *am* your roommate. Have you never had a roommate before?”

He chooses not to answer the question, lest it includes separate anatomies as housemates as well as Dr. DuMaurier. And dark irony under the influence while communicating with a progressively testier Will Graham seems inadvisable.

“Hannibal, I’m *here* ...” Will speaks a little more insistently, the passion in his voice rousing heat through his whole body. “You’re *not* alone now. Let me in.”

“You say you are here, but when the present moment works in your favor,” wants to manifest through his vocal cords. But dignity and unintentionality restrain him from saying anything further.

He is exhausted both in body and with vigilantly sitting half out of the corner of his eye, disconcerted a padlocked mind palace door will open in front of Will without the power to hold back his words all over again. As always, he is considerate, whether it be from obsession or silent love.

“And if I don’t?” also wants to betray him, but he is terrified of the answers that might bring.

So, he cannot admit his hand or heart or challenge Will’s without retrieving a few more preferable fragments of his old life.

Can’t live with him...

Capitulation.

Will finally gains conviction after a whole year, and he cannot bring himself to say the words. Words that have become so inadequate over half of the happiest decade of his life, allowing his hunter instincts to express his love for this brilliant, beautiful young man he lost his heart to so long ago. He is disappointed in himself but chooses not to hate. Emotional self-flagellation *is* but a compulsory bandage to deeper wounds that cannot be healed by mere will. And *his* wounds have been secured and healed with time, mind palace doors tightly and intentionally secured.

He eases off his chair.

... Can’t live without him.

Eyelashes dig into the tops of his cheeks, attempting balance.

“H-Han...”

He feels the air from the other side of the coffee table spring up, Will’s warm aftershave and lago-scented undertones flexing in his direction.

But he raises a dismissive hand, gripping the chair’s arm cushion with the other, unable to discern if he will either get to his office across the foyer or the stairs first. Like always, he chooses ambiguous inevitability and surrenders to fate, whether it be a created subjective abstraction or the Greek thread bearing sisters.

“R-really, Ha-Han...”

He silently and ill-advisedly shakes his head, and the room spirals or vice versa. He advances blindly toward the partition. And he reaches for it as side fringe brushes over his helix, not even realizing the back of his head dropping blindly backward.

Fingers coil around the same frame where he saw Mischa’s solemn, small face peeking around.

He turns, lurching a step toward the right side of the foyer and then another.

He releases his fingers from the partition, seeking the next texture.

“Hannibal, it’s OK to ask for help!”

His hand drops onto the cool, oak newel post’s orb, ignoring Will for his own good.

He clutches the polished handrail, steadily lifting one sandbag-feeling foot after the other up each stair. Every impact is but a physiologically painful reminder to keep his eyes squeezed shut and that he *will* fall if they open. The fact that he would be resorted to William's assistance does not go unnoticed either.

He feels his head tilt back by itself once more, long side-fringe liberating the apex of his cheekbone.

In a way, it hardly feels like walking through Castillo Lagos Simetricos, but rather a hell he created, a narrow, dark corridor that isn't entirely inspired by Indo-European romanticism.

He grips the smooth oak gliding across his palms even tighter and pushes himself against the railing. He takes his time climbing the stairs as numb pressure tingles up into his ankles and the lower quarter of his shins.

He *did* bring this on himself.

A deep breath makes him even more light-headed as he hears himself thickly swallow.

And a faraway fear of padlocked doors springs into his mind and nerves.

"God-fuckin'-damn it..."

A loud thump against wood echoes up the high ceilings, reverberating into his unsteady eardrums and temples, and nearly pushing his lower body away from the balusters.

He becomes aware of the shock associated with Mischa last weekend hovering over him. The flat black behind his eyelids is tinged with a little gray, almost smelling blood and burnt hair and flesh. Tears almost interfere, darker charcoal at their corners.

He almost feels her small hand on top of his knuckles.

A particular heat associated with the lift of her tiny smile spreads through synapses.

He feels an almost childlike grin spread across his face.

But the heaviness around him rocks, his grip on the handrail tightening even harder.

A shakier breath ebbs then wanes.

The sensations disappear.

He continues up the steps, alone, slowly feeling his arms going numb along with his feet.

He raises one sloppy foot to the next step, and then the other. And every impact makes him wonder if he should be crying or not. Physiological electricity answers, his tear ducts tingling from a distance more as an idea than a temptation.

He is too tired to care.

And he is too calm despite his fury, however righteous.

“I *SWEAR* TO GOD, HANNIBAL, I *WILL* LEAVE!”

He reaches the top of the stairs, turning to the left and gripping the wall and handrail.

A firm breath wafts inward with a hum, and tears finally slip out of their own accord, either from the change in tactility or something far more explicit. He flings his left hand over onto the same wall as his right, almost tearing his slick eyelashes off his wet cheeks.

He clumsily stumbles and gropes for his bedroom door, smooth movement grazing underneath his tingling finger pads. The same finger pads that have ached so many times since dessert to study Will’s neck or the beautiful constellations in his beard or the tears dripping from cynically bright cerulean eyes.

“AND I *KNOW* THAT’S WHAT YOU *DON’T* WANT!”

He hears his throat making a soft, distressed noise, echoing behind closed lips.

He kicks one numb foot out for the base of his bedroom door, moving almost painfully throbbing fingers from the smooth frame down to the knob.

The jam gently ticks and nothing sounds more like a heavenly orchestra.

“I DON’T *NEED* TO BE AN EMPATH OR PSYCHIC TO SEE IT!”

He carefully shuffles in and unintentionally slams the door behind him.

In the morning, he finds another USB in Will’s carefully placed iPad, and its file name holds the same date as before.

[Interval III.]

Sunday. 16, October 2016

11:30 pm ...

He walks forward as if hypnotized.

He feels the indents of his loafers flattening low-cut grassy turf, the heat of the fiery ring ahead distantly sweltering his skin. His head gently rocks on its own as if anesthetized or in a dream, breath remarkably steady despite the circumstances.

Everything will soon come to an end.

Will will leave him soon.

It is as if a human form slowly takes shape inside the bright, white-golden light behind the flames miles away from them. But the glow is blinding against the deep blue nautical sunset overhead, cloaking everything in and beyond its path.

He winces, focusing on the redder-orange fire barrier.

If he didn't feel so drugged, he could almost hear its crackling.

But neither of these destinations is meant for him, looking at the blaze much easier.

"🎶 Beati mundo corde... 🎶"

Will starts to smell progressively tense even with the space between them, his sweat glands dancing like piano strings in an ancient rhythm in the open, cool evening air.

They move closer to the light.

He sadly smiles down at Abigail, dressed in the clothes she died in, walking between them.

Divine light shines directly into her pale, girlish face.

But she doesn't flinch or look up at him, her clear, blue eyes beaming an absolved smile.

A deep pain wants to tug at his chest.

He wants to brush her long, dark-auburn hair over her shoulder, to offer her comfort with or without her ghost's consent. He wants to ask her if there is any forgiveness in her soul. But he knows better; human frailty even within the soul is as fickle as when enclosed.

Abigail would be Will's Statius to follow him into paradise.

Her visage is not for *his* solace.

“🎶Quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt... 🎶” the angel sings, gradually revealing himself as a beautiful, well-sculpted and golden-skinned androgyne with wavy shoulder-length chestnut-brown hair.

He groggily looks down at the fire at the angel’s feet, wondering if they had met in a past life.

“🎶 Beati pacifi, quoniam fili Dei vocabuntur... 🎶”

But all of this *is* for Will.

“🎶 Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam... 🎶”

And *he* must disappear in a matter of minutes.

Tears tremble in his tear ducts, the slightest movement tilting the turf under his slippers.

“🎶 Quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum. 🎶”

He *must* be fated to disappear like Virgil.

Will's dark, yet sun-kissed curls flicker out of the corner of his eye.

He blinks over, noticing Will staring at him, worried and terrified.

The ends of his lips twitch in encouragement, feeling his heart practically radiating out of his linen shirt.

Will will be fine.

Will takes a slow, deep breath, a mournful shade of royal blue taking over his eyes. However, one reflects the bright divinity in front of them while the other steeps in shadow. His jaw delicately clenches as it always does when faced with a challenge, and he wants to smile.

Will *will* be fine... without him.

“Holy souls...” the angel speaks with a blend of Bedelia and Alana’s voices as it practically echoes up to the starry moon-sphere above them, spreading their white-robed arms to the starry sky.

He looks ahead, finally grasping why Virgil faded from Dante after this canto.

“You cannot move ahead/Unless the fire has stung you first,” the angel gestures long, honeyed fingers down to the flames, “Enter...”

“What should be said of him cannot be said...” a girlish Lithuanian accent whispers into his ears.

He feels himself melt, realizing this is what he used to imagine what Mischa’s voice would have sounded like if she had lived into development.

Everything stands still.

He stands even more solid, and yet even *this* is worrying.

But a little smile lights up his face, hearing her reciting Michelangelo Buonarroti.

“Enter the flames, and don’t be deaf to song you’ll hear beyond.”

“By too great splendor is his name attended/...Nurse his fortunes...” slowly fades into silence.

That holy, vindicated light spreads even further across Abigail’s face, her pale complexion even brighter.

She walks ahead of them, her scent barely lingering unless from his memory.

And he feels nothing but relief for her soul, ready to be purified by divine fire without prompt. His leftover bitterness silently makes peace with itself, and a small portion is almost jealous of her willingness. Although she will never forgive him, a small part of him wants to call out, to ask her to watch over his little sister.

Will stands alone beside him.

And he is blinking down to the fiery ring and back up at the angel, terrified and apprehensive. He shakes, his body exhaling exquisite nervous chemistry that used to rush a flood of serotonin under his skin.

But he finds himself surprisingly calm, almost outside of his body.

His temples mockingly swim.

And cicadas and crickets begin their nightly nocturne.

“Things that suffer death, quench not the fire...” slides out of him in a sing-song tone, hearing English *and* Buonarroti’s mother language coming out of his throat at the same time.

He gradually smiles over at him, making the lightheadedness even worse.

Will turns and meets his eyes, his lower lash lines shamelessly flooding and distorting the incessant majesty of blue irises. Dark pupils flex, scared, and he *must* convince him.

He aches to stroke his blue-flannel-clothed arm, to kiss him with every ounce of his unrequited, restrained passion.

“Ri-ricorditi/Remember..."

He gravitates to the space Abigail occupied with surprising ease, discovering his cards slowly reveal themselves.

"Ricorditi/Remember...”

Will swallows his fear, and his endless pupils focus a bit sharper, though not entirely satiated.

“Of deathless spirits; nor eternity/Serves sordid Time, that withers all things rare./Not love but lawless impulse is desire:/That slays the soul...”

“Our love...” trembles out from a distance, aching to cup his cheek.

Will narrows his intense look, clearly worried.

He swallows, discovering his throat dry but his eyes wet.

“ *Our* love makes still more fair/Our friends on earth, fairer in death on high...”

“Hannib–”

He shakes his head, silencing him and taking the high road.

“If I guided you to safety even upon the back of the Red Dragon, then now, closer to God, what shall I do?” drags and stutters out of him as if he is drugged on sodium thiopental once more.

His linen-clad body feels even heavier, his head gently swaying on its own.

Will stands even straighter now, concern glistening in his oceanic eyes.

Deep, navy astronomical twilight inches off the westward horizon.

And the air surrounding the seventh terrace’s grassy knoll moves like a slow cassette tape.

“And if you think I am deceiving you, draw closer to the flames, let your own hands try out, within the fire, your clothing’s hem—Put down, by now put down, your every fear...”

But Will turns to the flames, still unconvinced.

And he can smell the terror in his eyes, the scent making him more mournful than aroused.

“T-turn toward the fire, and enter, confident!” he hears himself unexpectedly choke out a bit louder, and holds back even more tears, feeling his cards attempting to flutter onto the soft grass between them.

He clears his throat once more, fighting away every ounce of discomfort.

The sound exacerbates his existing lightheadedness.

“Thi...is...” he lifts his hand, but it gestures upwards in slow motion by itself, indicating the fire ahead.

He smoothly turns towards the fire and Paradisio’s attractive angelic sentinel, Abigail’s silhouette having fully dispersed through the veil.

Crickets play a delicate solo in their night song.

“W-wall stands between you and the life you have believed you deserve.”

And yet, he would like nothing more than to be the one to throw them over *this* cliff, throwing them both down to hell where Will belongs with *him* .

Will blinks back down to the fire, parting his lips.

“🎶 Venite, benedicti Patris mei... 🎶”

And he wakes up, laying on a rough, concrete step, having no memory of walking through the fire.

“The sun departs, evening comes...” the angel pauses from his song to speak to only Will, the soft, blended echo of Bedelia and Alana’s voices feeling as if they unintentionally mock *him* . They still stand behind the fire, smiling their green eyes at Will with such compassion he wants to wrap his arms around him and follow his instincts.

“🎶 Possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi... 🎶” an angelic choir from above assists the soloist.

His entire, naked body aches but in familiar, exquisite pain.

And soft whiskers brush his bare chest.

“Don’t stay your steps, but hurry on before The west grows dark...”

Will remains immobile.

And he smirks softly before turning back, raising his hands with surprising ease.

He softly cradles Will’s jawline and maneuvers the beautiful boy to look at him, relishing in the soft texture of his trimmed stubble and feeling his will deny its instincts.

Blue eyes gradually close with a deep breath.

And he is a camera lens soaring through a deep-blue Italian night sky freckled with silver stars and now rarely-seen planets, ecstatic summer air blowing across his knuckles and through his hair.

“Now I know well that fond phantasy/Which made my soul the worshiper and thrall...” he hums softly, brushing a curl behind Will’s ear.

Tears collect against Will's short, lower lashes.

He shakily breathes deeply, brushing his thumbs across tall, smooth cheekbones.

"Of earthly art, is vain; how criminal/Is that which all men seek unwillingly..."

His thumbprint glides onto a wet slim apple.

"Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,/What are they when the double death is nigh?" he softly hums in both English and Buonarotti's Italian, closing his eyes so gingerly his heart aches even more poignantly.

His camera lens looks down, viewing a long, pale, naked figure lying up across the dark concrete steps.

And it is *his* body.

His bare, muscular shoulder blades dance, and his buttocks writhe, thrusting himself deeper into Will.

But he cannot (or will not?) feel it.

Will's arms wrap around his pallid hips, all of his available body hair from this angle standing on end.

Darker-toned fingers grip the slim, pale fleshy meat of his buttocks.

He softens his gaze down onto Will's closed half-lit eyes, blind to the angel standing in front of them and paradise's absolving flames.

They open a bright, royal blue, blinking up in their height difference.

His heart melts, so in love with this dual light and dark across his face and those black, boundless pools. They sharpen as if he is about to speak.

"The one I know for sure, the other dread./Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest/My soul that turns […]/Arms to clasp us on the cross were spread."

"I … I've b-brought..." he trembles breathlessly.

Tears glaze and choke his throat, knowing *this* part will be a little more difficult.

But he will not fade away like Virgil.

He carefully swallows, clicking his lips open.

"You h-here through intellect and art; from now on, let your pleasure be your guide; you're past the steep and past the narrow paths. Look..."

And he gives in, dropping his forehead onto Will's.

He breathes in, smelling wafting inactive sadness and yearning, tracing the bristly constellations of Will's beard, cool on one side and warm with fire on the other.

And *this* is organic, inherent movement that will tell Will of his heart.

If he could pray, he would pray for reciprocal interpretation even with their half-broken synchronicity.

"A-at the sun that shines upon your brow..."

He lifts off Will's forehead, laying lips flat against the thin flesh.

"Look at the grasses, flowers, and the shrubs born here, spontaneously, of the earth. Among them..."

Will shivers, dopamine and serotonin waltzing into his nostrils.

He breathes it all in, nestling his forehead against his for the last time.

He *will* not fade away like Virgil.

"Aw-awai...it..." softly sobs out.

He clears his throat.

"Han—"

"A-await no further word or sign from me..." he interrupts with a careful, high-pitched bark.

He coughs back the tears, opening his eyes to find curious pupils staring back at him.

He steps back, swallowing their remains, lifting off of Will's forehead and unhurriedly slides his fingertips off that beautiful jaw.

He will *not* fade away like Virgil.

"Y-your will is free, erect, and whole—to act against that will would be to err: therefore I crown and miter you over yourself," he speaks with startling assurance, his eyes shining proudly despite their mourning.

He nods over to the fiery horizon.

The brightly lit angel continues to stand in this attractive human form, oddly patient.

He ***will not*** fade away like Virgil.

He smiles back down into Will's endless blue eyes.

"I am ***in*** love with you, mylimasis, my darling boy..."

His eyes blink open, feeling pain shooting down his back and bent neck.

And he is awake, realizing he fell asleep laying across the desk pad of his home office. Nevertheless, he remains here, in literal and figurative pain, mildly aroused from afar and feeling the tears already spattering his cheeks.

[Interval IV.]

Wednesday. 19, October 2016

6:23 pm ...

Will's truck door slams.

And a loud, inhuman sound whimpers through the kitchen window.

He almost cuts himself while cutting radishes.

He smiles and stands straighter, smelling the warm, sunny air and realizing the inhuman noise does not seem as human as he had hoped. The knife sits down on the cutting board, disappointed.

"It's alright, girl, muchacha..."

"Come on, do you *want* me to carry you?" Will asks with a lovely, half-apologetic tone. "No?"

And he already feels his feet carrying him to the backdoor.

"Well, that's OK too..."

He looks through the bifold wall of glass doors, and a solid, white streak runs the breadth of the fenced-in backyard, the grass and sky bright with springtime.

It sprints back to an unusually relaxed-looking Will standing on the edge of the driveway, turning its black and brown splotched face up at its master with a short, high-pitched cry.

He smirks wholeheartedly, crossing his arms.

It was *bound* to happen at some point!

Will smiles down at the dog, chuckling as he crosses his rolled-up gray sleeves, his face and shorter beard beaming an unearthly light against the golden late-afternoon sun but not just for her.

Through the screen door, he can almost smell the reason, a faint aromatic impression created by espresso and pie, and clean, ordinary feminine soap. A quarter of oxytocin floats alongside it bludgeons him in the stomach.

And yet, a small part of him isn't too surprised.

“Aw, you’re alright, girl,” Will chuckles, pulling his hand out of his jeans pocket and dangling his fingers down in the dog’s direction.

The bitch flinches backward, half-whining a tiny, high-pitched whimper.

“How about we get you cleaned up? Only *one* of us is allowed to smell like the lakes around here, and it really shouldn’t be you, that is if Hannibal *will* let you in the house!”

His smirk turns into a grin.

The boy knows him well.

Will wiggles his fingers in encouragement towards her, smiling wider.

And he feels a small part of himself melt.

But the dog looks up at him, tilting her head and shuffling backward with a louder whine.

“Don’t worry, muchacha, no one will...”

Will pauses.

He steps out of view, knowing.

And blue eyes slowly look up through the main porch door.

“Hurt you here...” draws out cautiously as if Will believes him as petty as *he* has been.

“B-but, come on,” he chuckles back at the bitch, wiggling his fingers at her with an affectionate glint in his eyes, “ *I* know *you’re* not afraid of a little water! I’ll *even* let you watch me draw your bath.”

He turns, heading into the garage, which doubles as his fishing shed.

And the dog’s skinny, stark white body follows him through the side door, her heavily swishing stub of a tail disappearing into the dark garage. He even finds this oddly endearing, never having pets unless one would consider wild swans.

The ends of his lips quirk, scoffing down at the porch's wheat-colored area rug.

This *was* fated to happen.

He only hoped that it was not a frivolity after their shared words on the subject.

He moves back to his salad assemblage, which will precede an already half-premade spiced “lamb” and dill yogurt pasta.

But he feels his eyes slowly close, silently breathing in the remnants of oxytocin still floating through the open kitchen window. It smells like impassioned reactivity, a lower octave of Will’s participation from this angle. And it smells nothing like a lighter, more playful, and joyous hormonal release of caring for a four-legged creature.

He also has not seen Will since yesterday morning, an inch and a half of beard ago.

And last night was *also* his business dinner in Sarmiento.

He, on the other hand, took Sebastian's offer.

And it was in the form of a lovely al fresco meal at a charming café.

They fervently discussed Comodoro Rivadavia, poetry, and art, and he had never felt calmer in the presence of another man despite this continued sense of inaccessibility. Sebastian even confidently gave in and bragged that UCLA wanted him to come to lecture his "Borges as Political Animal" thesis next spring.

'Disappointed?' Castillo half-coyly smiled back at him, reaching for his Malbec.

'As a colleague? No. As a man?'

He playfully hummed to himself, sipping his wine with a smirk.

The question was left rhetorical to the cool evening breeze and the combination of soft, faraway live music down the street and the white noise of the surrounding small crowd. Sebastian persisted in smiling back at him through this prolonged silence, a quiet knowing glowing in his attractive dark brown eyes and handsomely chiseled square features.

He softly chuckled down to his plate.

'California *is* a cathedral of polygamy. You shall never want for intercourse,' he smiles to himself, taking another forkful of matambre arrollado and silently relishing in the complexities of socially acceptable protein and vegetable textures lightly drizzled with chimichurri. And the flavoring is sublime, making a mental note to bring Will here to get out of his self-defined "habitual groove."

'And *intellectual* discourse?'

'Plenty,' he blinks back up into those sharp pupils, not feeling that soul-piercing poignancy when looking into Will's eyes, but rather a lovely, noncommittal playfulness. And it has been a long time since he has felt like this, wondering if he has aged out of this kind of promiscuity in these past four years.

He raises his chin, picking up his glass of Malbec.

'To the promise of future discourse.'

Their goblets gently clink.

'And for *this* discourse to never lose traction,' Sebastian cheekily grins, suggestion weighing heavy on his beautiful face.

'You must be a *real* poet in email form, though,' he jokes to himself over his fainâ, which he insisted he try. And at first taste, he is inspired to recreate this chickpea flour-based pizza for

Will as well, ‘I look forward to this.’

Small, curious brown eyes blink up at him.

‘I should only hope that *you* will not want for intercourse around *here* , Adamova,’ Sebastian carefully draws out in a young but confident voice, sitting progressively straighter as he brings a piece to his full, clever lips.

He bites into it, and the depths of his lovely pupils practically sang a siren’s song of their own.

‘I’m still getting into, as the Americans would call, the “groove” of things around here, dear Sebastian. I shall entrust your wife and you to network me with the finest Comodoro Rivadavia has to offer in...’ he chuckles, gently swaying his knife and fork over his stuffed flank steak and salad, ‘either capacity.’

The night ended with a lick of brandy and an obscene number of wine-infused kisses at the Castillo apartment.

If he could lend his heart to Sebastian, he could have almost considered the young man’s kisses compassionate.

‘Déjame cuidarte, cariño mío Adamova...’ a soft, cool breath pulses down his bare stomach, warm fingertips sliding up his ribs and palming an erect nipple.

He closes his eyes and takes a content, deep breath.

He feels his jeans unbuttoned; a steady inhale then exhale rustling the forestry past his navel.

‘Let me take care of you...’ hotly murmurs into skin.

He could almost have wept at Sebastian's words if he had emancipated his heavily guarded feelings toward all things Will.

He rolls his head back on the sofa’s neck rest and attempts to swallow the brandy’s thickness still on his tongue, silently allowing Castillo to make his own decisions. He craves aggression but not necessarily submission; the reality of the effort another pair of hands with their own thoughts and intentions has to offer.

And everything is wonderfully tight and slicked with spit.

And it is perfection.

But he finds himself more lost in the sensations than in the person, feeling further inside his mind.

He remembers thoughtlessly carding his fingers through Sebastian’s longer, flat hair at the crown of his head, realizing the texture unusual but not undesirable. A small part of him

starts to partially yearn for Will's rough, half-unkempt curls, his finger pads continuing to capture uncharacteristically smooth brown hair.

And that gifted mouth did not disappoint, showing off its prowess as his throat demonstrated just as much proficiency. He heard himself climax down Castillo's throat also from a distance, rubbing his thumb down a slimmer, bobbing Adam's apple as he happily gulped. There was also a chance he might have come from that as well, with ghostlier sensations separating his mind from his body.

If it weren't for Sebastian's rules regarding his wife, or vice versa, he would have fucked the man right into his marriage bed's mattress and taken advantage of his adoration for having his hair pulled.

He would miss him.

But he also cannot take the risk of having made friends with someone who would possibly be questioned by FBI agents continuing to rotate State-wide airports.

Water noisyly echoes into metal.

The dog barks a single, loud bark.

He smirks unevenly, glancing out the window over the kitchen sink.

Will fills a metal tub in the backyard while sitting on his knees, smiling such an unrestrained smile up at the nervous canine.

It simultaneously bludgeons and spreads warmth through him.

Will wordlessly stands and walks towards the house under the window, where the outside faucet dwells, lowering the pressure. He turns back to the basin, and a white blur anxiously follows, watching his every move.

She squeaks a tiny whimper, clearly distrusting and yet fascinated.

He holds his breath, silently hoping Will did not see him.

Lower water pressure slaps inside the half-full basin as soap is distributed with care.

But the dog continues to avoid her bath, retreating further into the greener yard.

Will continues to silently communicate bright blue eyes over to her, a smile arching the ends of his mouth and the shorter length of his facial hair. He sits back on the ground in his good jeans, scoffing down to the grass between his feet as he hangs his elbows on his knee caps.

He slowly reaches into his pocket.

She whines.

He pulls out and looks down at his burner phone as if to say, "I'll wait until you need me."

He discovers his eyes partially blurred with tears, turning and looking down at the cutting board and a partially uncut radish. And the spread almost looks like a van Gogh still life, the blurred red countering the haze of the darker cinnamon-shaded maple wood underneath.

The image calls out to him.

His tears dry on their own and he continues to chop, finding it cathartic, the weight against the blade shivering deep into his bones.

The dog whimpers another tiny, high-pitched noise, excitedly lurching every which direction out of the corner of one eye. An almost contented prance moves her closer to Will then scampers in the opposite direction.

So much like his relationship with Will, a long-running tango even as his darling boy is finally sitting on Argentinian soil and coming across as patient. But patience *is* dependent on subjective participation, and an empath *would* value greater emotional intelligence toward a four-legged animal.

He looks down at his task, resigned.

And his thumb is bleeding.

He lifts it to his mouth and sucks, turning to the sink and staying to one side of the window where Will does not see him.

If his nerves were those of his ten-year-old self, he would have felt the cut zing through his whole finger. He feels nothing now, rinsing the painless nick and reaching into the cabinets below the sink for a bandage.

Water loudly splashes.

And a loud, familiar laugh follows.

He stands up, looking out into the backyard.

The tall, thin, white dog jumps and sloshes in the metal tub, panting and smiling a large, tongue-revealing smile at her master. And her master's gray dress shirt is soaked through even as he starts to softly chuckle, the affection so bright in his eyes it stabs him in the chest.

"Yeah, *you* know you love water," he chuckles, picking up a soapy sponge from inside the basin.

Will lovingly washes between her ears, and she happily closes her eyes and smiles a wide, tongue-bearing smile as she makes a tiny, high-pitched noise.

"Huh..."

Will slightly tilts his head, sweetly grinning down at his task.

“Hey, Río!”

She looks up, grunting a small half-bark and snort right in his face.

Will chortles to the back of his throat, scratching one of her sopping ears.

“Not bad, huh, muchacha?” he chuckles, washing down her white fur to the black patch on her lower back.

But she tentatively smiles up at him with a gentle splash, inching her wet brow toward the gray buttons of his shirt.

And something strikes deep within bone marrow and perhaps even his soul, feeling unbridled tears sliding down his face.

He feels his heart opening a tiny bit wider, and only for Will. And, in some way, he realizes he is inadvertently hurting the boy despite all good intentions.

He still yearns for Will to *want* to be here because he *chooses* to stay here, and *not* as a last resort or an alternative to suicide! And although Will has not explicitly expressed wanting or having attained plans on returning back to the States, the only way for him to stay would be to involve lesser manipulative measures! He must listen to his distrusting and expression-sore intuition, for better or worse.

He lifts his wrist, wiping either side of his face.

But the formation of individualized and intuitive habits is always much easier to plan when one is off their feet. Poorer decisions are usually made when upright and drenched in survival.

The screen door hisses open.

And the dog growls a low, threatened grumble.

He looks up to the ceiling, composing himself but smelling nothing but wet dog.

“Before you say anything, Hannibal, *calm down* ...” Will cautiously calls out toward the front of the house, slowly walking into the kitchen with a bundled-up armful of dog, “Río is *all* wrapped in a towel, and I’m *just* taking her to my bathroom so I can give her a full brush and dry.”

He is half-tempted to quip back in his surprise that William Graham has a hair dryer.

But perhaps that is part of the problem.

“Ah...” Will continues to look through to the foyer, not realizing he is standing at the kitchen island.

He smirks and chops into his still life.

“Ruff...” the dog jerks in his arms and turns to look at him, her silly black and brown-sculpted face surrounded by the old, large, gray towel looking rather frightened and standoffish.

Wet shoulders sink with an almost defeated sigh.

“And *who* is this?” he asks with a tiny grin and sets the knife down.

“Will...” he hears himself mockingly chastise, standing even straighter and wiping his hands on a hand towel. The small, covered nick in his thumb reacts softly.

“I found her wandering around the Senguerr for the past few weeks...” Will smiles more to himself, the shorter length of his beard still a bit staggering in the closer distance. “And no one has claimed her yet, alright?!”

“Then I trust she will be pampered and trained by you until someone does,’ he smiles good-naturedly down to his radishes, perhaps teasing a little *too* subtly.

"Ruff..."

“Hannibal...” humorlessly reprimands across the kitchen island.

He smirks at his work, looking back up.

“I know, Will. I know. It was almost fated to happen,” he chuckles and nods over at who will become Río in this strange, little family, “Buenas noches, señorita.”

Will shakes his head, elaborately rolling his less-hardened blue eyes.

He begins walking past the island with the charming dog in his arms, softly panting as she rests the side of her head on his damp shirt.

“Oh, an-and...” Will turns around in the doorway, casting a darker, knowing shade back at him, “Hannibal, there *is* something in the *trunk* ...”

The blue of his eyes flashes as if in an unspoken code, considering both trunks contain false bottoms.

He blinks wide, beautifully surprised.

“I *think* you would like. I would have had it gift-wrapped with visual evidence as to its occurrence, but...” he quirks half of a sheepishly humbled grin, petting and gently scratching the dog’s covered back, “if *I* were you, I’d take care of it sooner than later.”

He feels a warm surge running through him, and the feeling is even better than last night’s orgasm.

“Hannibal..." Will narrows that secretive look in his eye, studiously turning his head to one side, "D-did *you* get laid last night?”

He pinches his lips together, unflappable.

“And did you, Will?”

Will narrows his gaze even further, and that secretive look vanishes as he walks backward into the foyer.

“Río, sometimes I *swear* he has a Sherlock Holmes complex or something...” he mutters as he walks up the stairs, lighter footsteps echoing down through their baseboards.

A low chuckle pulses down to the last of his radishes, moving on to the arugula.

But before assembling the pasta, he goes out to Will's backed-up truck, half vibrating with excitement. And from this unflattering angle, an unsightly, obese 50-year-old man lays dead on the dark, matted false bottom.

Arousal shoots through him like cold water, breathlessly dropping his hand on the tailgate and realizing he is already having a nerve-based orgasm. The impact of his palm on padded metal gently echoes through the bright, sunny air.

He slowly looks up to the second floor of his Castillo Lagos Simetricos, the shadows of the dark olive siding even stronger eastward away from the slowly setting sun. There is no sign of Will or his dog – Río – in the windows facing the driveway.

His eyes blink down at the large man in the narrow passage, unable to see much except for the wide beige soles of his loafers. He practically shivers in anticipation of learning how this happened.

He takes a deep breath, composing himself while digesting as much as he can about what brought out Will’s sense of justice. He also captures a glimpse of the dying sun and another burst of springtime germination, and it is, as always, a pleasant shock to his system.

But the large, dead man still carries the smell of unrequited sexual adrenaline and leftover anger from having been interrupted, in addition to the stink of cigarettes and alcohol and Stage 1 lung cancer also breathing out of the truck’s false bottom.

A tiny smile plays across his lips.

The fact it was an avenging kill is not *too* surprising.

And there is also the smell of garbage and rats and dead mice.

So, Will killed a rapist in a Sarmiento alley somewhere, and he cannot be any prouder.

He slides his hand across the tailgate toward the shoe sole, feeling his mouth water at the possibilities.

Smoked lung with enough char removed.

Half-dried liver for sausage.

Heart for any last-minute craving.

He stands up straighter, happily sighing and pulls his hand back.

He softly moans up to the slowly setting sun, allowing another touchless orgasm to ripple through his body. A little of the germination on either end of the driveway amplifies his nerves and perhaps even his soul – that blurry line between heightened primitive sexual arousal and spirituality.

But he instinctively looks up at the bifold window panes, cautiously watching for any movement.

He blinks back down, knowing he works better at night. And dinner would be made even better just silently observing Will across the table, despite his self-imposed promise to speak more often, knowing he did this without secondhand pre-emption or suggestion. He won't even actively search Will's body language for another not-so-secret internal battle.

Their new friend would be procured and back in Will's truck by morning, silently knowing (or perhaps hoping) this to be their modus operandi in this second life together. He hopes that Will would be responsible for disposing of his own and mutis mutandis.

Will, without a stable career and his ability to drive to all the surrounding lakes, could drop the rude or move out of the county to throw off any unnecessary, scented odors. But a small part of him wonders how he can trust his intuition. Will could always regain control of his senses even within his chrysalis and deliver the deceased to local officials.

He closes the underside, and the gentle echo thumps loudly into his ears.

He walks into the house, pleased and giddy that Will finally took the next step.

10:18 pm ...

An old itch twitches, ready to prepare Will's perpetrator. He has missed this feeling, gaining even more of his old self. It practically burns his muscles, softening his lounge clothes over his body as if they are expecting to be submissive to a plastic overlay.

He pauses reading Stone's Buonarroti biography and sketches a few notes onto his notepad.

His deep, golden-lit office door nudges open, and a high-pitched, disembodied noise curiously whines.

He smirks halfheartedly, huffing.

And her small, funny face appears around the desk, curious and smiling merrily.

Río retreats her tongue back into her mouth and barks a deep closed-mouth sound up at him. He watches for signs of her wanting to be taken to the backyard to relieve herself. However, he sees nothing, knowing Will took her out before he retired to bed an hour ago.

She leaps her front paws onto his outer thigh, happily panting into his face.

He shakes his head, sitting his book down and scratching one oversized ear.

Her brown and white cheek nuzzles into his palm.

He takes a sharp breath, a bit teary at her vulnerability.

"You are a funny little dog, aren't you?" He manages to chuckle, leaning down to pick up her wiggly, white body. She allows his touch without a fight and unravels another tongue-bearing smile directly into his face, almost as if she wants to lick him.

He stands from his chair, holding her a few inches away from his chest.

And Río tries to fight the distance, forced to tongue the air between them instead.

He feels a drop of spit spray onto his shirt, slightly grimacing.

"But you do not have to worry about *me* , Río..." he leans against the front of the desk ledge as she attempts to sneak another kiss.

He chuckles an unbridled chuckle, wrapping one arm around her waist and ruffling one of those silly, over-sized ears with his free hand. She attempts to nip his wrist, but he barely feels her playfulness and finds it far more endearing than anything else.

"I would not hurt you as Will may have alluded to earlier. Besides..."

She wiggles, smiling an even wider grin, her happy panting smelling like dog food and perhaps a few pieces of “lamb” from Will’s plate.

“ *You* would not qualify for my kindness anyway, although the Mayans would not consider you royalty all that much either...” he laughs to himself, continuing to scratch. But Río keeps grinning and breathing in his face as if she has some awareness of the English language.

Her tongue captures the side of his wrist, and it is a much more acceptable kiss.

“They would eat you sooner than I would. But I am thankfully not Mayan, nor do I have a taste for the socially accepted four-legged pet variety.”

She turns her attention away from the salt against his thumb tendon, smiling that black and brown face directly into his eyes as if she is aware of his melancholy. And it *is* not uncommon for dogs to read tone and body language.

Funny face.

Juokingas veidas.

Mischa’s occasional nickname kinesthetically returns.

He feels himself melt a little further, gently scratching the side of Río’s face.

She nuzzles her other cheek onto his collarbone, and while he is aware of the probable pet hair, the affectionate touch is delightful warm water against his low lamp-lit, readerly sadness. And her happy panting grows progressively heavier.

Perhaps he *could* open his heart to an animal of the pet variety, having watched Will do it so well.

A soft vibration churns through the lower half of her warm, wiggly body.

He instinctively sits her back down, preferring that if she had an accident, it would occur on his pristine oak floors rather than linen-covered skin.

“Come, juokingas veidas...” he ushers her through his double office doors, and she happily prances into the dark kitchen as if knowing enough of her new domain, “You strange girl...”

And she looks like a pale žaltvykslė from his childhood fairy tales, her white body flitting and leaping from one short fence post to another as she sniffs for an adequate spot around the perimeter.

He sighs and crisscrosses his arms, the late hour and the references to his childhood leaving him feeling somewhat haunted amidst a soft puff of the late-night, springtime breeze. An atmospheric thickness arises over his forearms tightening over his chest, evoking the latter, and it loudly beckons him after his captivity as if returning to form or a forgotten self.

And a newly molded self he has become with Will’s latest incarnation, a psyche capable of being lured to wherever that beautiful boy is trapping him.

And he is *allowing* himself to be ensnared, a small part of himself holding his breath as to the consequences.

His only options are trust and a looser method of expression, a physical manifestation of "who Hannibal Lecter is when no one is looking." Will's coined "person-suit." But there is a question as to the appropriate quantity next to Will's emotional grenade.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

** Contains a flippant mention of suicide, only intended to clarify the difference between ideation and resigned world weariness. **

Friday. 28, October 2016

8:15 pm

A blueberry, free of dulce de leche, falls onto the oak floor.

Río bounds towards it, happily devouring what looks to be her new favorite food.

She sits her wiggly white body near his chair, leaning back on her haunches, and her tags happily clink against the oak panels. The noise seems to punctuate her iridescent joy as she looks up at him with a wide, open-mouthed smile.

“Ruff!” innocently garbles up at him, curiosity flashing across her funny black and brown face.

A disembodied huff snorts from across the coffee table.

“ *You* spoil her,” deeply restrains a chuckle.

He smirks down at her, that long, pink tongue, at last, sliding out and happily panting with a bit more expectation.

His chin lifts, a smaller, poised smile gradually shining over to Will.

“So?”

Will stares passively back at him.

He waits, not entirely patient or oblivious to the possibility of another emotional grenade.

The beautiful fatality of the music in this deliciously minor key fills the air. He becomes even calmer in the synthesizer’s half-meditative repetition, finding some strange serenity in the electronic half-inaudible chanting. And yet, it is a shame that Will is not better acquainted with happier music appropriate for the spring season.

A forkful of custard and dulce de leche slips between his lips.

A small light ignites in Will's face, and it slowly arrests his whole well-shaved face as if against his better judgment. He sharply huffs, shaking his shorter mop of sun-kissed curls towards the unlit fireplace, deeper and tanner smile lines stimulating the wrinkles around his mockingly defeated blue-gray gaze.

He quietly smirks, not entirely innocently down to his dessert.

A soft gust of caramelized milk and tinier, creamier notes of coffee wafts through his nasopharynx.

"🎶 There are two colors in my head/There are two colors in my head ... 🎶"

"It's poetic irony, Río. Isn't it?" Will grunts down to her, sinking his fork into pastry.

He feels goosebumps trail up the back of his ribs, silently recalling his oft-repeated conceptualizing of Will's alley-way escapade and how it has occasionally aroused him to a more masturbatory degree.

Río happily whimpers, turning around to face her master, possibly with a large, tongue-bearing smile, convincing *him* to honor her with blueberries.

Will huffs and grins down at her between bites.

He looks back across, swallowing, all traces of his smile lines softening.

"🎶 What, what is that you tried to say?/What, what was that you tried to say? 🎶"

He carefully watches, feeling his already straight posture stiffen.

" *I* discover her, and yet when you *and* I are in the room together, Hannibal, she gravitates towards *you* !"

His smirk reappears.

" *You* go to bed too early..." he hums, lifting his chin with a chuckle.

Río turns back around out of the corner of one eye, wearing an even wider grin as if his words promise blueberries or ear scratches.

He turns his lips fondly in her direction, disappointed with the rest of his dulce de leche-stained blueberries.

He has grown rather fond of the Chilean Terrier, a fellow sportsman with hunting in their blood and DNA. And despite Will's alluring alley-way vengeance, perhaps the hunter instinct in Río sees the same in him. The probability would not be *too* surprising.

She sneezes onto the floor, admitting defeat to her master and kindred spirit.

She prances towards her light-gray lounger underneath the window, and his hand blindly drops, scratching the black spot near her tail before disappearing behind his chair.

Will rolls his eyes with a grin, biting into another forkful out of the corner of his periphery.

Río has made herself quite at home even in this distrusting household, although she is no better towards her master at times. Will's progress with her slowly improves, and conversation about her learning behaviors has alleviated the walls of his Castillo Lagos Simetricos in a way he had not thought possible. And a newer leaf not entirely shaped by Will's inner battles has turned.

But he has become rather disappointed in himself instead.

He blinks down at his espresso, discovering a new, more aware shade of chagrin tints the tall translucent glass of water and white pill on top of the wooden coaster.

It has officially been a month since Will's first experiment, of a different and unexpected kind of fluctuating distrust. He just wants it all to be over, equally exhausted in wanting Will to end his burdened suppositions that he will leave no matter the consequence. But faint memory *does* remind him that Will *has* said he would have very few options if he left, that he has ruined him.

There was also something about a podcast on the fall of the Roman Empire.

Yet another cerebral stalemate feels scarcely encouraging.

He wants to tear the remaining drywall down, to find himself submerged in Will once more, uncaring of the prickling possibility of rejection or friendship. All attraction be damned! The closeness remains addictive even after all these years and the tumultuous last few months.

And yet, the heart wants what it wants.

And it is *his* heart that wants.

Even with old habits beset, he returned to the original USB port rather than tampering with Will's second gift-wrapped scenario sat on the kitchen island last weekend.

He would not give *him* the gratification.

He heard his stammering, cracked voice recall harsher flashes from his childhood, lost in the mental landscape of shattered rooms in his mind palace like a traumatized ex-client under hypnosis. He thankfully didn't divulge the precise cause of Mischa's death. Despite that, trembling, half-broken Lithuanian still stumbled out like shattered mirror fragments, his eardrums still haunted by half-embarrassed humility in the faint memory of their reverberation.

Since then, burden *has* fallen off his shoulders.

The unconscious choice was, perhaps, safer, but this route is always left open for interpretation.

He relayed the information in the same way to Bedelia, who, no doubt, offered this information to Will. The fact frustrates and haunts him, itching at the need to freely speak all

of himself to this man across the coffee table. But there is interpretation for all languages even in the mildest throes of mistrust, even though there will always be such paroxysms.

Will continues to gradually destroy his resolve, his fragile relationship with himself.

And he *is* the one to break.

There is no question.

But the paradox lies in *how* to crumble while maintaining balance, or, to be indelicate, Freud's garish ego, without resorting to the oft wrongly elucidated mirage of hyper self-control. Proud percipiency to be diluted to pretension, the ridiculous notion of "Hannibal Lecter's person-suit."

He *must* break, and he must unravel Will's perceived flesh threads.

He blinks down at the white plate still in his hand, the creamy brown dulce de leche and garnishing blueberries on top of his half-eaten flan.

The familiar, upbeat, yet solemn rhythm steadies and soothes his pulse and nerves, the richer orchestra of guitars swelling his determination, if only slightly, towards something close to a manifest.

"Will..." trembles out of him from a distance.

He guides the plate down to the table in front of him but instinctively holds onto it. Sitting it down cannot be a default action anymore when a dog has canine-specific dietary restrictions and is close to the height of the coffee table. And the nestled dish in his palm feels odd without a sense of gesturing emphasis.

"Will, why?"

"Because I *want* to know you again," a confident voice echoes from the other side of the room.

He slowly inhales, blinking to meet Will's eyes.

They look into his as overcome as *he* feels.

"🎶 Drying up in conversation/You will be the one who cannot talk ... 🎶"

Río's dog tags clink against the hardwood floor.

An exhale slowly slides out, tasting of dulce de leche, still staring into those endless black pools.

And he *has* to be the one to break.

But he will not give this beautiful, confident boy the satisfaction.

“🎶 All your insides fall to pie—🎶”

He slams the edge of his fork handle down.

Río nervously whimpers, wildly jingling her collar on the floor.

Even Will jumps at the noise.

And the sodium thiopental is broken in half.

He smiles almost victoriously to himself, popping a portion of the pill and forcing his throat muscles to urge it down.

“A draw, Hannibal?” Will chuckles, slowly narrowing his sardonic blue gaze.

He hums, setting the water glass back down and sitting back in his chair fully hydrated in self-hatred.

“A compromise.”

“But compromise involves accommodation,” Will leans back against the gray cushion with an almost smug sheen across his face, crossing one ankle over his black jean-clothed knee cap, “How must *I* acclimate?”

A rough chuckle ripples through his throat, looking down to the other half.

“By never asking me to do *that* ...”

He blinks back up, unapologetically applying a little pressure.

“ *Ever* again.”

Will slides another forkful between his lips, smiling an impudent smile in his darker eyes.

He feels his blood boil between anger and attraction.

“And *yet* you took the other two whole tablets so easily, Hannibal.”

And he is cornered once more, ensnared by Will’s beautifully enticing sadism.

His skin gently glides against stagnant, linen clothes, his senses hovering towards a state of touchless intoxication between Will's casual perversity and the caramel sweetly coating his throat.

“And why is that, exactly?” Will blinks, pinching the smile lines around his eyes even tighter, “Are you *so* desperate for me to stay?”

He blinks down at his espresso, feeling the partially crafted words thick against the lingering taste in his esophagus like snowflakes on hot skin seconds before melting.

And yet, he cannot say them.

“You know why, Will.”

“As you *might* know, Dr. Lecter...” Will sarcastically chuckles, continuing to balance his dessert plate on a gray chair arm with one hand and cupping his knee with the other, “Putting one’s emotions into words is *usually* encouraged in the fields of psychiatry.”

“And mutis mutandis...” he smiles down at his half-eaten flan, officially finished with this conversation and every last inch of its finery but not without *some* elegance.

“But what more...” he slowly grins, gazing over at the beauty that is Will Graham in his solid dark blue button-down, the color matching his remarkably shining eyes under this light. “Do you need to say, or is it *I* alone who must endure punishment for my previous sins? You are not the only one suffering inside silence, Will, however...”

He raises his chin, feeling a sense of poise glide down his spine.

“ *I* do not over-assert my hand.”

A new song begins just on the edge of an eardrum, a higher-pitched guitar riff cascading like a serrating brush stroke hellbent on artistic presentation.

And he feels a tiny smile on his lips, sinking his fork points back into the flan’s flesh.

Smooth, sweetly garnished custard slides down his throat, each heavenly floured and milky note mindfully exhaling through his nasal passages.

A bereft-looking Will sighs sharply, wildly blinking around his side of the room. And he cannot help but take a silent delight in this, managing to display delicate yet justified self-expression, although perhaps with a little less composure.

“🎶 All these things into position/All these things we’ll one day swallow whole ... 🎶”

Will furrows his eyebrows and tenses his jaw, creating handsome tanned wrinkles around his eyes and forehead, wafting beautifully frustrated. His nerves smell deliciously on edge, glazed with a specific kind of divine sweat mixed with one or two teaspoons of delighted sadism.

Arousal falls like ice-cold water on his nerves, daring him to shudder, mid-chew.

And this new mixture is addictive, luring him further into that war-beaten chrysalis despite all his best efforts to respect whatever set sense of boundaries lies between them now.

Will’s eyes settle back onto his, and his thick, long eyelashes narrow, encircling dilated pupils.

“S-so...” He shakes his head, rustling his dark brown curls as though trying to rectify the silence. “Ha-Han...”

Will glares at the drawn curtains with a sigh, brushing his fingers down his chin. A scoff seems to disrupt his melancholic expression as he lifts his eyebrows and flails his hand into

the air, slowly appearing to be at a loss for words.

His heart draws closer to that elusive location.

“Wh-why can’t you *just* kill me?”

And he feels his heart beating in his stomach, his gaze slightly widening with heartbreak. His stomach aches as a result of his negligence, however minute.

“🎶 These thoughts and the strain I am under/Be a world child, form a circle... 🎶”

Will turns and blinks down to his hand, still balancing his plate on the chair arm.

“🎶 Before we all go under/And fade out... 🎶”

“Getting rid of me *would* allow you to move to Comodoro Rivadavia...” He blinks his bright, wounded blue eyes across the coffee table, loosening his tanned neck tendons and jaw muscles.

But these words are a constant, harder shove over the cliff, a slow, curving blade in *his* gut repeatedly bringing back memories.

“T-to be closer to work and easier access to your lovers...”

A chuckle falls towards the last quarter of his dessert, the movement slightly drying the tears in his eyes. He takes a deeper breath and lifts his chin a touch higher, although a little less poised than before.

“He will be leaving on a lecture series soon,” he hears his voice lift with a faint smile, taking up his fork.

And he is still working on where Sebastian is really heading, ensuring that it will be nowhere near the states or anywhere around major European cities.

The young, male singer’s voice lifts with the solemn, unnerving instrumental bridge, background vocalists adding ghostly melismatic utterances in a higher key. And this almost-disquieting comfort empowers his mind and soul, enabling him to lift himself out of Will’s speculation.

But his words *are* difficult to shake.

His fingers gently tremble, slowly sensing that he is detaching from his body while simultaneously still inside of skin. The halved capsule slowly enters his bloodstream, signaling a new chapter in its demented odyssey now littered with Will’s haunting music and ridiculous, jealousy-stained presumption.

Will huffs, raising his elbow to the gray arm cushion.

He smirks despite himself.

But the boy almost looks like an almost-jealous five-year-old as he balances his tanned, callused fingers underneath his chin.

“Have you reached your age of reason to confess jealousy, Will?” slides out, rather amused.

He grins a little wider at his final syllables as they finish thumping in his ears a second later, believing a shamelessly expressed metaphor ironically feeling like heaven.

“ *I* am not jealous of *them* !” Will bursts out, his New Orleanian accent a shade thicker.

Río whimpers, her identification tags tinkling against the floor behind his chair.

He glances over at Will with a small, chastising look in hopes he won't spook his already distrustful canine any further, silently hoping that he will recognize its intent. But he also cannot help but press his lips together, noticing his nerves are remarkably calm.

“Him...”

Will seems to correct himself, scrunching his eyes shut and shaking his head.

“Wh-whatever!” he grumbles and blindly cradles his temple, pushing back shorter unruly curls from his brow. He steadily glides his fingers up towards his hairline, and his face softens slightly with the firm massage.

And he watches Will’s hand continue to rub higher across his forehead, observing the rough, tactile length of his fingers and thin knuckle skin. His pupils feel even darker and more dilated without prescribed assistance.

Will shakes his head even faster, raising his eyebrows in frustration.

“D-do whatever the fuck *you* want to do because I’m *sure* you’re gonna do it anyway!”

A deep, trembling breath draws inward.

“Some say that jealousy is like water in a tea kettle...”

Will loudly scoffs, frustratedly shaking his closed eyes up to the overhead wood beams and balancing his chin on his knuckles once more.

But *his* pupils singe with analytical delight and undeniably delicious provocation as they flare with another kind of fire. An internal toll of pure, helpless terror inexplicably twitches at the same time, a sharper blow informing his nerves that narcotized oceans he cannot escape nor control will soon consume them.

“Under constant pressure, Will. The tea kettle *either* ...” he gestures his dessert plate towards one chair arm, “Breaks from the internal damage done or...”

It gestures to the other.

“Must be alleviated. If the boil is not towards whom you call my lovers, then toward whom? Myself?”

Will takes another sharp, deep breath, very deliberately not answering his question. Closed eyes turn towards the fireplace’s mantle, pinching together even tighter and prompting darker-tanned crow's feet to slowly emerge from their corners.

And silence surges between them.

The music returns to a recognizable music-box-like quality, and his nerves tighten with irrational fear, not wanting to fall back into this kind of hell.

“🎶 You look so tired, unhappy/Bring down the government. .. 🎶”

He continues to watch Will attempting to carefully breathe with his eyes closed, blue on blue buttons down his chest waxing and waning with the tide. For the moment, he is a less narcotized ocean, matching Will's moon and finding *his* breath even calmer.

“🎶 They don’t, they don’t speak for us... 🎶”

His silently agitated nerves are soothed by the instrumental music, scanning the column of dark blue shirt buttons, the top three predictably liberated and unveiling Will's tan, pronounced collarbone.

He cannot help but quietly grin, observing that glowing skin and Adam’s apple.

“🎶 No alarms and no surprises/Silent, silent... 🎶”

It almost doesn't matter that he has nosed that hot, tanned skin, further intoxicated by the combination of sun, sweat, and suntan lotion. Restraining his own emotions and arousal for Will is his one-sided accommodation, his years-long, private compromise to secretly see the boy as himself without intruding secondhand bias.

The room gradually begins to feel like a pool of water.

Synthesizer notes form into droplets, dripping like thick paint.

His heart aches once more.

Will takes a deep breath and relaxes his jaw.

And unseen capillary wavelengths increase their velocity, reverberating like the heavy friction of clock hands striking midnight around his warm shell.

“An-and...” Will speaks a notch higher, quietly sighing, and digging his fingers into curls then dropping them on his bent knee with a soft clap, “Th-the Kintsugi to repair?”

“An-and...” Will speaks a notch higher, quietly sighing, and digging his fingers into curls then dropping them on his bent knee with a soft clap, “Th-the Kintsugi to repair?”

“D-depends on th-the reparation, Wi-ill...” he tries to speak quickly, but his words echo and stretch against the thickly ebbing and waning waves daring to enter his heavier emanating heat.

“🎶 This is my final fit/My final bellyache... 🎶”

He raises his chin into the air, gently clearing his throat.

But the room spins, the spirals expanding outwards.

His head swims.

"Do you wish to recognize such b-boiling waters, or, do you per-perhaps wish to reframe yourself in response to their flow? One cannot will a river t-to surge to his whims.”

“You’re enjoying this *way* too much, Hannibal,” Will sarcastically shakes his head, balancing his chin on his fist with a glint of humor in his blue eyes.

“Never, Will, seeing you l-like this breaks my heart.”

His pulse lifts with the faintest uptick, attempting to barely react to his own words lest his face unknowingly deceives him. And yet, more weight falls from his shoulders, released from a density that only Atlas could understand.

Will shakily inhales, sighing with the outtake.

And his broken heart throbs for that shattered fragment of himself.

The music has been turned off.

Nerves flicker against its absence, causing goosebumps to prickle along with wavelengths.

Silence swells, momentarily yearning for American crickets or cicadas.

“S-so, why *don’t* you kill me?" cuts into the stillness.

Even at a distance, he stares directly into those endless pupils.

“I cannot d-do th-that, Will...” he blinks down to his empty plate, seemingly resigned to this never-ending fate and the even faster spinning room. His head tilts to one side on its own, a victim of its weight, and feels light nausea in the back of his throat.

“Wh- *why* ?!” Will scoffs, the annoyed noise softly echoing.

His gaze dares to remain on the half-clean state of his white plate, refusing to tempt what must be tonight's fate any further.

“Y-you do it so easily at the whims of vindicating the rude,” Will sneers with a faint New Orleanian lilt, almost hellbent on provoking him, “how you punished your previously caged moth for *your* sins.”

He shoots back up, glaring back with even dizzier nausea.

And he has been lured back in.

Will tightens his delectable jaw and narrows his slightly blurry blue eyes, looking startingly unflappable and yet attractively regal even as he continues to hold his empty plate against the gray arm cushion.

Arousal tempts to spike his bloodstream, Will's face distorting even further.

"O-oh Will..." he softens his stare, remembering his fury. But he quietly sighs, utterly baffled, "I would ha-hate for y-you to b-believe that."

"And yet you hold no fault for her death?"

"I..." he winces, swallowing and then clearing his throat.

Wavelengths respond like dreamily stimulated piano strings, daring to penetrate his warm shell.

"I have plenty, Will, but only that I could not save her."

"From yourself..."

He bolts off his chair, wobbling once on his feet.

Even blearier, hot air lurches in front of him.

His hand lifts, refusing Will's assistance, however warranted.

"I will *not* listen to this, Will..."

He feels his feet weakly depart into the foyer, leading into the kitchen's small hallway.

And Río is panting somewhere behind him, her dog tags tinkling with the gentle tap of her paws.

"And I will *not* have you provoke me for the sake of provoking in *her* name!" he firmly calls over his shoulder, hearing a faraway, thicker Lithuanian accent coming out from him, seeing red but keeping remarkable composure.

He slips into the kitchen clumsily, barely feeling attached to his slippers and not bothering to turn on the light to generate more dizziness.

Something pulls at his temples, drawing him outside of himself.

And the dark pulses around his temples.

The dark pulses, mocking his anger and perhaps even divine vengeance with that distant, glaring sense of fate. And the kitchen is drenched in bruised spirituality and commination,

enveloping the deep blue tinted darkness and suffusing everything with dreamy vertigo and a soft menace, whispering but not quite whispering his unspoken conclusions.

Conclusions that *must* remain tacit.

He feels himself carefully move around the island, silently attempting to rise above Will's words.

The kitchen grows, glaring at him with every step.

The air surrounding its marble waterfall edge is brisk with evening spring, lake-scented musk lethargically heaving through the open window.

He stands in front of the sink, furiously frowning down at his dessert plate.

Dirty white stares back, albeit gray from the low, exterior solar lights.

He would gladly break it if it were not for Río's safety or that he rather enjoys his new porcelain and would be loathed to lose one. But it could safely break in the sink.

He could even plunge one of its shards into Will's throat, but the idea barely piques curiosity.

A glorious, fire-stained Lucifer stands alongside him, not manipulating temptation or exacting fury, however deserved. It is but a reminder of his fall from grace, reawakening from dormant yet alive past lives in order to consider the present.

And when the light-bringing morning star fell...

He feels flames lick down his linen shirt sleeve, and he cannot tell if it is a blessing of friction or *his* divinely radiating rage.

But liberating Will like that would only give him what he wants.

He feels his knees almost buckle, rising serotonin blending with the sodium thiopental.

His free hand slams down on the edge of the sink in an effort to steady himself.

The impact loudly echoes in eardrums, the kitchen's walls flexing further outwards as if in a reply.

He waits, silently summoning the will to beseech Atropos to cut his frayed, world-weary thread, for Lucifer's glory to vindicate his softening heart and calcify him back into himself, into an aspect of the fallen angel. He rather misses that self, indebted to no one and fully aware of every refined sense flowing from his person.

Tears coat the corners of his eyes.

And yet, he feels the most like himself like this, balancing cognizant self-interest between tightly glued fragments of nuance.

His eyes close, one or two tears sliding down either side of his nose.

Wavelets of gentle lake air blow across his face, offering some semblance of solace.

“F-forgive the silly man,” he hears himself whisper in broken-Lithuanian, slowly tilting his head up into the heavy flow perfumed with soil and the gentle, blustering rhythm against his cheeks, “He knows n-not what h-he says, Mischa.”

He smiles to himself wholeheartedly, feeling closer to skin.

The silence engulfs.

The refrigerator begins to hum, and the noise loud echoes in his ears.

And if he prayed, it seems he *would* pray to Mischa before Lucifer.

He quietly sighs, staring into the sink and feeling a solemn pulse wrack through him.

Dog tags and paws clatter in erratic rhythms feet away at the backdoor.

He smirks to himself, feeling a touch calmer even with a fitful Río in the room.

The buzz slowly escalates, and Río scratches her nails into the door even more aggressively.

And he is lost inside the softly chilled shapes waving across his face, the darkness deepening behind his eyelids to a full, unforgiving black. The curtains of pride and ego slip further away, and he exists alongside every noise and texture as if they were Lucifer-blessed absolutions.

He even smells Will walking through the dining room and slowly moving into the kitchen.

Flames down his shirt sleeves die down.

Río whimpers higher as if she expects him to open the door.

Will exhales almost half-apologetically, empathy and fault warring against one another.

His dessert plate gently taps down on Carrara quartz, reigniting frustration.

“I-išim...” shudders out of him.

He clears his throat, attempting to swallow the tremor.

“T-take your dog out, W-Will...” he hears himself mumble, gesturing towards the backdoor and immediately regretting this decision. He dizzies, holding himself up with his palm flat on the countertop and feeling his weight shifting in the same direction, “I d-don’t th-think I … I can, at th-the moment.”

“Fair enough...”

Will's house shoes softly step over towards the door.

"Ah... alright, Rí...H-Hannibal, *please* sit down..."

"I will n-not..." drags out.

Will groans to himself, unlocking and opening the door.

"Come on, Río, Uncle Hannibal can't help you..." Will pauses, and he senses a pointed scowl in his direction, "Right now..."

And the door closes.

He feels himself tremble at the symbology from an even further distance, tripping further to one side. The kitchen leans even heavier on his head and shoulders, tempting him to nearly fall over.

The ceiling stretches, the menace narrowing.

His lips are already quivering at the possible allusion, despite knowing it will not happen.

And he *wants* to sit down but chooses not to.

This is what Will wanted, a strange sort of submission to *his* environment that he could control through redirection. And this would be the price to pay for misinterpretation and the inability to speak of Mischa's perpetrators – the inconstancy of human communication.

While it may be one thing to uncover traumatic scars while attempting to rebuild trust, it may be another to hold the other party accountable even if wronged.

To be provoked in her name was abhorrent, although perhaps a bit too easy even for Will.

And he is *done* with being ashamed of past, uncontrolled experiences.

Tainted piety slightly softens its scowl.

Menace, however, consumes.

He has avenged Mischa over his adolescent years, and he will not atone for a single second of it, other than the loss of the blessed Lady Murasaki.

Hostility almost threatens to rear its ugly head, to explain all of his childhood to Will and yet without neglecting *his* wellbeing. And yet, admission would blow the doors of his unrequited adoration even wider and into vaster territories of unabashed expression William would be unprepared to receive.

Nothing ventured, and yet nothing gained.

Even so, he knows he is not a failure.

Thus, the circle of human frailty loops back around.

“Good girl,” Will chuckles, the sweet sound blindly carrying through the window.

And breaking the cycle is one thing, but to an audience capable of quick anger is another. Having control over Will in their earlier years of friendship was much more palatable against gentle synapses sparking that post-first impressionistic fascination of starting to understand another human being.

He sighs into the sink, finally placing his plate inside of it.

The kitchen swims, the cool, spring air dense against his face.

The plate’s metallic echo still reverberates, adding to the refrigerator’s hymn.

“Río...” Will's voice rises even higher, her dog tags clinking together, “Come on, girl.”

“Nooo...” Will draws out, chuckling although a strain is evident in his tone, “No fetch at this time of the night, alright? Come on!”

A smirk gently ruffles, and everything else gently rocks along with it.

Threat swims around him, the walls narrowing against his elbows.

And he is *so* exhausted, finally feeling his age.

The patio door hums and soft footsteps and paws make their way towards the backdoor.

He has no desire to summon any more movement.

But it charges away in and around his body. It is in his arteries, the slight twitch of thought-mobilized muscles and nerves. It almost seems redundant at this point to ask Will for assistance, at least with humiliation still lingering in this thick and alive air.

Its clouds begin to slightly part, the walls even moving outwards.

And yet, he is too worn out to care.

“Yeah, *there* you go...” Will speaks a bit higher to his foundling, shutting the door behind him.

The rhythm of Rio's paws prances up to him, happily panting.

She weaves between his legs, and a happily vibrating, wet nose nestles into the back of his knee.

He resists a chuckle.

And the heavily inclined kitchen and his even more unreliable feet wobble.

His temples throb wildly, and his chin nods on its own.

“Río, nooo...” Will’s gentler New Orleanian accent draws out lower, and an even greater humbled scent draws even closer. “Vamos, muchacha. Uncle Hannibal is a little dizzy at the moment...”

She quietly yips, her dog tags clinking somewhat defiantly.

He purses his lips, fighting off a smirk, considering this silly dog and unexpectedly new title.

The arid, sharp odor of canine anxiety wafts through the air, slowly vanishing into the sitting room.

His molars clench, concerned for his fellow hunter.

“You ha-have provoked her in s-s-some way, Will...” he hears himself tease, blindly turning his head a tad too quickly and knowingly inciting dizziness, “Y-you must be exhausted of all of th-this g-galvanizing.”

“Hannibal, please sit down!”

Will's careful scent advances on him.

He bitingly grins to himself, considering the amount of caution in his movement.

He opens his eyes into a wince, swiftly side-stepping towards the wrap-around counter corner in time to miss Will’s warm, helpful hand. But his body feels like an impermanent ocean wave, dragging towards the dining room as the walls appear wider than before. Nerves jump at the lack of tight, invisible barricades around them.

That glare softens in its menace.

A sharp sigh echoes out behind him, followed by a soft clap on cloth.

“A-all of humankind i-is inherently s-selfiish, Will...”

He continues to grip the counter edge, drowsily walking past the dishwasher and the free-standing electric stovetop, clasping its cold, water-scented ledge.

“N-no m-matter the amount of em-empathy or disdain,” he grunts and turns, reaching for the island’s quartz. His arm wobbles in the air as he realizes his hand did not receive any impact.

“And *you* do not claim selfishness in recent months,” Will quips sarcastically.

He quietly smirks, opening his eyes a tiny bit wider.

The dark, blurry Carrara taunts him with its gray dance, mocking his failure and a 5'9' shadowed silhouette of Will Graham stands on the far side of the island, pressing his lips together, resisting the urge to laugh.

“I si...” he pauses to wet his dry, heavy throat and swallow this purveying sense of nausea, but even this is still a provocation to the open, dense air, “s-simply do not claim y-your p-perceived selfishness, outside of our t-tumult. I...”

A jagged exhale sighs, so weary of talking.

“I … I have quite enjoyed m-my life f-for th-the first t-time in a v-very long time,” he grabs the cool, smooth quartz with a soft grunt, shuffling forward, “Even b-before im-imprisonment.”

Will scoffs a bit more childishly.

He awkwardly moves around the island, feeling his hand lift from the softly buzzing quartz from a distance. A menacing commination stares at him from all angles, waiting for something yet to be named, a repetitive pulse pushing inward.

“An-and you kn-knowingly provoked m-me, Wiilliam...”

Will groans, progressively irritated.

Fingertips drop, his senses dreamily sharpening against the alive, lake-scented tactility.

He carefully looks up without moving his head.

Will steps forward, utterly bewildered, rubbing his closed eyes and raising his eyebrows. And he barely looks like a matted piece of art in this deep-blue darkness, slowly dragging his fingers down either end of his mouth and dropping them at his sides. Air spirals around him and he almost trips over himself just from *Will’s* movements.

He desires to soften his half-performed deadened pupils with proximity but not forgiveness, straightening his posture solemn yet threatening. He starts to proudly lift his chin, but it clumsily flops downward, his attempt to impose failing against the sodium thiopental.

“Th-the details of M-Mischa's death is q-quite obviously not up for d-discussion!”

But he can feel “for now” at the tip of his tongue, clouds of disappointment surrounding his judgment.

“Yeah...” Will slowly draws out, looking rather humbly down to the space between their feet and scratching the back of his head, “I expected this. I...”

“I hope you know, Hannibal...” he speedily murmurs, shooting back up with a nervous twitch in his shadowed blue eyes. He drinks in every last refined, sharp curve of those endlessly black pupils, feeling aching adoration for the soul inside of them swell in his chest. “I don’t believe a single word of what I just said, just the anger behind them. I *saw* your trauma laid out in front of me...”

A shameless, broken sound sends his gaze to the Carrara ledge.

Sickness lifts to the back of his throat.

Will's warmth twitches in the air between them.

"I … I m-might not know the *complete* narrative, and I may *never* will, but I haven't been able to get your face out of my head ever since and th-the way y-you..."

Will huffs wordlessly down to the oak floor panels.

He blinks back up, meeting those pupils once more and unable to remember the last time they were standing closer to one another like this. The all-encompassing addiction swells as if it were magnetic friction, slow, warm density floating into his orbit. He cannot help but wonder if Will feels this as well.

His eyes begin to darken in passion, in friendship, in a ghostlier sense of lust.

He feels his head moving against his will as he struggles to keep his eyes open.

"Hannibal..." Will speaks in a sensitive hush, softly but humorously grinning a small, sincere smile and gently provoking shadowy crow's feet, "I *believe* you are showing vulnerability..."

"What d-did B-Bedelia t-tell y-you ab-ab-about m-my childhood, Will?"

He grips the island ledge, focusing on its crisp temperature and delicious scent.

It still smells like Lecter Castle in the spring.

Will softly clenches his jaw, even more defined in this consuming dark. Darker blue eyes catch his attention, and his heart throbs to reach out and touch that handsome boy's face, to at least have the honor of touching those bristled constellations.

"W-we're in a kitchen once more, Hannibal," Will cynically taunts, illuminating a tiny, ironic smile through shadow and looking around one of his favorite rooms in his Castillo Lagos Simetricos, "Is it an invitation to recreate anything? To carve into previously more physical wounds as contemporary retaliation?"

"Ideation, W-Will?"

"No..." Will sighs with a curt snort, lifting his eyebrows down to the floor.

"Objective exhaustion," he rhetorically groans and digs his hands into even blacker, enticing curls as dark blue nautical twilight shifts to astronomical.

Enviable fingertips disappear into longer curls, their length brushing up against knuckles.

"World-weariness..."

"A-are or are n-not synonymous wi-with atypical American con-confessions?"

He holds his breath, worried.

Will lights up with a kind of nautical twilight, meeting his gaze, purposefully but mockingly cornered.

And he is *so* lost in the soulfulness behind those smiling pupils he does not entirely register Will's shirt gently rustling from a distance. As they gaze into his, his eyes remaining fixed on their beauty.

And the distant sound of a belt buckle gently clanks.

A sharp pain of arousal shoots through him, shifting his hand backwards on the ledge and inadvertently causing even more unnecessary dizziness.

"Even still..." Will continues to stare into his eyes with care, clenching his jaw and blindly unbuttoning his fourth shirt button, revealing more chest hair.

And lust falls like ice water on the sodium thiopental, almost flushing it all out of his system.

"I-is th-this another ill-dire..." He pauses to catch his breath, silently swallowing into that deep heaviness in his throat but hearing the watery gulp loud in his eardrums, "D-directed pr-provocation?"

The thought of Will adjusting his clothes for murderous access is infuriating, yet he cannot desire to get on his knees faster to caress that smile with his nose and mouth, to whisper into warm, healed skin than Will's ears how much he loves him. But the once-damaged skin already knows, healed scar tissue forever powerless to forget.

He blinks slowly, enduring lightheadedness to loosen the arousal out of his pupils.

"Si-simply admitting apathy, H-Hann..." he looks down to the island counter, narrowly staring into the gray-shadowed Carrara, "I ... I don't even care *what* you would do to me anymore."

"Ooh, Will," hums out of him, surprisingly good-natured, "You *really* sh-shouldn't s-say that t-t-to me..."

One step forward sends his shaky grip to the nearest bar stool's top rung.

He sways and yet stands still, the walls flexing inward.

Fate loosens its nocturnal glare.

Will grabs his biceps to steady him, the intuitive touch not registering as sensual as it could have been. And his freer hand travels upwards, settling against the thinner brush at Will's beautifully-angled jaw.

Goosebumps unashamedly trail up his spine.

Those glorious bristles bite his palm, attaching knuckles and fingertips to the firm jaw like grooves.

Will sighs sharply and gently clenches his molars, glaring even sharper dark blue eyes at the strained grasp he has on the stool.

“You a-are m-my weakness, Will...” lovingly pours out of his lips as he strokes his thumb down that noble chin, the touch faraway and yet so close at the same time. Tears knowingly collect in his eyes, dragging his thumb pad across the shallower depths of Will’s beard, “D-do you n-not know th-this?”

“I … I did...” Will chokes out and slowly blinks up, revealing tears across his lower lash-line.

He hears himself sigh a deep, cathartic sigh, but does not feel as absolved as he had hoped. And yet, his entire, exhausted body prickles with delight, happy to be intensely dizzied.

“I just had no idea you would ever act on it.”

“I-it was always con-consideration f-for y-your inclinations, Will.” He attempts to lean closer, distantly smelling a startling calm and yet slight defeat emanating from Will’s particular soap and mediocre aftershave, “I have n-nothing to l-lose n-now...”

“Except maybe a roommate...” Will sarcastically mutters down to the island.

“Pl- *please* d-don’t say th-that, W-Will...”

He lifts his hand even higher, cascading a thumb down a shapely cheekbone and landing on the faintly salty wet apple of his cheek. Will's skin is neither too soft nor too rough, but a pleasant medium texture, and his lips and tongue ache to caress it in adoration more than lust.

Another unruly sound escapes him as if his heart falls onto the floor.

A thumbpad alleviates the slight glaze.

Will takes a slow, deep breath, closing his averted eyes down to *his* grip on the stool, the wobbly air around him not smelling or even tasting like offense. Doubt still shivers across the side of Will’s neck, silently enamored with the dark profile of his Adam’s apple.

And yet, *his* nerves are as tight as a drumhead for showing his hand so eagerly.

“I c-couldn’t bare your l-l-loss as well as you m-m-might th-think.”

He studiously watches his fingers graze down Will’s beard, silently relishing in the gently scratchy jungle of better-tempered whiskers. He wants to be more explicit, to speak the absolute truth that burns inside his suffocating heart. But he has done so well expressing those four specific words in the English language in other ways, he almost does not need to.

And an even hazier Will presses his lips together as if ticklish, thickly swallowing.

“Y-you *might* be surprised...” he whispers to the stool's seat.

“Hm. D-Dr. D-DuMaurier?”

“Wh...” Will sarcastically glances back up and half-defeatedly tilts his head with a cynical chuckle. He pulls back the curls falling in front of his ear, “Who else?!”

He hums a tiny smile, falling back into himself. But the lake-scented dizzying air almost trips him, the kitchen walls a surprising, stagnant anchor. And he desperately wants to sit down but would hate to offend his admiring fingers.

The silence deafens.

The refrigerator’s distant buzz returns even louder.

Río’s dog tags take a lively sprint around the sitting room.

He watches his hand curve, stroking a half-circle of fingertips across that strong jawline.

Will’s pupils sharpen, half-daringly, as if waiting.

And he feels his eyes blacken, circulation traveling down to his groin.

“R-really, Hannibal?” Will tauntingly scoffs, wincing biting dark blue eyes up at him. “You’re *finally* getting what you want, and you *don’t* take it?!”

He watches his fingers travel back to a nicely chiseled cheekbone.

“In-instant gra-gratification under th-the influence i-is b-but a c-compulsory bandage. B-besides, W-Will...” his voice starts to shakily smile, but the faint lift of his lips causes exhaustion to swim across every inch of his facial muscles.

He delicately brushes his fingertips back towards Will’s jawline.

“I... I a-am b-b-but considerate t-to your inc-inclinations.”

Will huffs, sarcastically shaking his head and tightly wincing his eyes.

“You’re impossible,” Will sighs over to the barstool, and he feels a much more effortless smile glide across his face, a deep shiver racking through the contours of his face, “P- *polite* , but impossible.”

“Y-you a-are wel-welcome, m-my d-darling boy,” he cheekily grins, feeling a faraway, gravitational pull of his chin bobbing downward.

“I have a beard the size of Argentina, and you *still* call me a boy?”

He smirks, chuckling to the back of his throat and resisting a loud yawn.

“I-it is a b-b-better p-pruned b-beard now, W-Will,” he moves his fingers across whiskers, adoring that they bite back like offended flames, “A-and it b-becomes y-your Caballero Pescador t-t-title...”

Will smiles with a mixture of sarcasm and knowing, smelling even less offended than before, and feeling relatively welcoming to his touch. He wants to hold his breath, terrified and yet elated at the possibilities to follow.

A thick curtain of silence falls.

His fingers still against Will’s face.

And the refrigerator hums its faint electrical buzz.

Even Río’s dog tags fall silent.

Will's iridescent smile retreats into his eyes.

And he stands remarkably firm, drinking in that beautiful, pale face shining within this deep, dark blue like a full moon against midnight’s endless dusk. The itch and sting of expression softly quenches the exhaustion beneath skin, begging for capitulation.

Will blinks, and something dark flickers in his smiling eyes.

He feels his body stiffen, his chin powerless to gravity and the tips of grown-out bangs brush across his cheekbones.

Will begins to watch him, easing the soft smile in his eyes.

Darkness responds, pulsing with a little less mocking.

Bristles soften underneath stagnant fingertips.

Will’s never-ending pupils transition to staring, question marks.

A lithe "what now?" rather than solid expectation weighs on his shoulders. And yet, if *this* is the question, he does not care to answer it even to himself.

But somehow, it feels as if they are finally in the same paragraph.

He silently prays for this to be true.

The question marks gradually disappear from Will's eyes, and a soft light slowly illuminates through his night-stained beard, glowing in a way he has never seen before and perhaps even approvingly.

His heart painfully throbs.

Will silently smiles the ends of his mouth, soft dimples rippling underneath his beard. His lips are not full of smugness or apprehension of a past version of himself, nor do they bite or converse with one another.

And yet, he has *no* idea what *his* face is doing.

Will parts his lips as if to speak, dark wheels beginning to lightly gear across his bright complexion.

He flinches, still not wanting the moment to end or to stop touching him. Yet dazed air distantly tingles with a fairytale-like shiver that the spell is soon to be broken. The broken spell will shatter, and he will return to groggy, bone-tired exhaustion.

“Say it, Hannibal,” Will reverently whispers, sounding as if his heart falls onto the floor between them.

Shameless heat churns down to his groin, his weight slightly tilting forward and back from the physiological movement.

And why should he say such things when his actions have spoken so much louder?

The refrigerator buzzes even louder, leaving a permanent echo in eardrums.

“I … I *need* …" Will nods to himself, blinking down and back up, “T-to hear it, Hannibal.”

His flickering eyelids are even heavier, thick bricks of nausea attempting to squash shameless arousal.

A firm, gentle touch holds his biceps.

And he finds himself weightless yet spinning, like a leaf falling through a brisk autumn breeze. But his hand falls from Will’s face with distance, sensing a firmer stool cushion cupping his seat.

He swallows back squeamishness, reaching for one temple to stop the room from whirling but that entity rocks in all directions anyway.

“Hannibal Lecter...” and Will’s vene cava seems to passionately fall out of his chest and collect alongside his heart on the oak floor.

He blinks to meet Will's gaze, endeavoring to move his head as infrequently as possible. But his head gradually tilts back on its own despite his efforts.

Will smiles, the ends of his lips arching upward against a tiny, daring downturned light.

He feels his chest ache, entranced by this smile.

“Are you *in* love with me?”

He smirks, feeling his heart swell in his chest.

The thicker, lower-altitude air spins cautiously, preventing him from showing more of his hand than necessary.

“Of c-course, Will, has it n-not sh-shown ov-over th-these p-past f-few years?”

He would have tauntingly grinned at the poor boy under any other circumstance. But any other circumstance would not involve Will being so resolute to force the words from his mouth. And he silently loves every second of this, adoration swelling tight, suffocating arousal in his chest.

Will sucks in a startlingly patient, deep breath, impudently shining down at him like he is about to half-mockingly chastise him at any moment.

“Y-yes W-Will...” he hears himself from a distance, helplessly smiling although disappointed it has to come out this way, “Terribly. I ... I am t-terribly in lo-love wi-with y-you...”

Will takes a deep breath and huffs out a sharp outtake, nodding to himself. An even wider smile carves dimples even higher into his cheeks, soft, clear moisture lining his lower lashes.

And this ache tries to loosen its grip on his heart, leaving him breathless.

He stands, gripping the top rung and brushing the tears from Will’s lashes with his free hand.

Everything begins to move even more dreamlike, exhaustion minimizing another soft surge of serotonin through his veins.

He barely feels the moment when his forehead leans forward to meet Will’s, noting a soft, warm-tasting pant out of another pair of lips inches away from his own.

But he won’t take advantage.

He tastes the synchronicity in his nasopharynx, where nose tips almost brush, and hot breath wafts out of nostrils and between two pairs of lips. And yet, he barely realizes himself, fully sensing all that is Will. And he smells Will as a buffet of emotions, their overwhelming intensity too much for his even heavier, weakened senses.

He smells and tastes the terror in his heartbeat.

His arousal.

His loud cautiously beating heartbeat.

Circulation churning down to his groin.

His desperate desire and restraint.

The smell of his lips almost touching his, softly trembling.

He feels a chill run down his spine, exhausted yet enthralled.

An exhale gently hums to the back of his throat, feeling a mountain lifting off his shoulders.

Yet Will needs to say that he does not consider *his* love an alternative to the lack of communication or inactivity. He needs to feel that Will is *in* love and loves him as much as he does, engaging in this even more glorious and soulful participation he has given up finding and pursuing since losing Lady Murasaki.

He is so tired of self-transcendence.

Another breath purrs back into his throat.

And yet, he feels his eyes happily close, breathing in Will's dulce de leche and espresso-stained breath.

“An-and you do not *try* t-to kiss me?” Will sweetly stammers behind closed eyes, soft gasps of his scent undulating through his lips.

He smiles to himself, blindly lifting his free hand to cup that bristled cheek.

“Will, i-if or wh-when I ... I sh-should...”

He pauses, taking a deep breath and heavily swallowing his ego.

“Ev-ever kiss you,” he hears himself stutter and draw out, his heart racing alongside and because of his words, “It w-will b-be wh-when I ... I h-have all o-of m-my faculties and b-because you w-wish it so, m-mylimasis.”

He considers verbalizing whether or not if Will chooses to go on this journey with him is the official determinant.

He slumps his forehead against Will’s with a sharp sigh, letting the dark behind his eyelids consume him. It would be lovely and probably humorous to fall asleep just like this, even if it meant for another person to drag all six feet of him. Will's arm has wrapped around his waist, and his whole body is done with being awake.

His heart picks up speed.

“An-and what does *that* mean?” another pair of lips whispers, leaning forward enough for just a slight bit of its soft, plump texture to graze his.

His temples swim, an ecstatic chill coursing down his back.

"I've heard you call me that before..." Will whispers softly, retracting his warm mouth.

And *his* lips lean forward towards that heat before retreating, sinking deeper into slumber.

“Beloved,” he deeply whispers, feeling Will's grip tighten around his waist.

[Interval V.]

Tuesday. 1, November 2016

National University of Patagonia San Juan Bosco

Art Building, Office #302

3:20 pm

The clear blue, cumulus-riddled sky shines and the sun is near blinding.

He feels his sharpened senses radiate against early spring heat whether from his light, heavenly meal of picaña asado or the simple majesty of nature itself. Unlike Michelangelo, the love of city balances out an equally divine "salvation in nature."

And he is enraptured, at ease between his roles as Adamova Ivanova and himself.

In a way, he becomes another self he never imagined possible.

He returns to his office from the same restaurant Sebastian had taken him to, having dined with his colleagues and becoming better acquainted with the sous-chef he had not met the first time. And each step up the front stairs of the arts building is an acute thump against the soles of his feet.

A gentle smirk raises at the bustling activity of students and faculty coming in and out of the large building. It almost manifests in a full, unguarded smile.

Like he has since Friday evening, he resists.

No promises were made other than his heart's admission. And yet, he *has* found it to be an ill-timed hindrance that has proven futile in front of strangers. If he were not so relieved, he would be rather irritated at this rekindled love-sickness.

Yet he still feels bound to paradox, not from his mind's judgment, but from the senses whetted *and* reinforced by behavioral patterns.

He remains affixed.

It is no different than existing between a rock and a hard place. But instead of these two idioms, he is caught between remedy and calm. The act of restoration and its end result. Those seductive in-betweens divined either by fateful influence or obstacle.

Fate.

Movement.

Reactionary movement blindfolded by providential consequences.

His loosened grip on Will's reigns remaining a physiological one dependent on distrust.

And his principles are once again up in the light, spring air, uncertain where or when to settle on solid ground. It should be a comfort that Will is also fighting internal battles alongside his slowly manifesting transformation. But the deeply introverted are often a capricious race, especially with equally shattered trust.

He stares out at the Golfo San Jorge, resigned.

And a gentle knock taps on his office door.

"Entrar..." he turns, the midday glare of the ocean still bright in his gaze.

Sebastian walks in, smiling, and closes the door behind him.

He smirks with approval, taking in every inch of that slim, 5'7" frame perfumed with studiousness and the agnostic taste of a defiant, sweat-scented Borges.

A bright smile shines on Sebastian's warm face as he walks up between his two guest chairs, pleased to see him. He swallows, his slender Adam's apple bobbing in the lovely, brown ocean of his neck. And nicely manicured fingernails sink into the leather strap of his crossbody bag.

"Ah... Sebastian..." he smiles, walking around his desk and offering his hand.

A warm, receptive palm receives his, that intoxicating, scholarly scent leaning in to kiss his cheek. Castillo's lesser vivacious five o'clock shadow softly burns his lips.

Even at his behest, he realizes what needs to be said.

"Es bueno verte, mi niño," he grasps Sebastian's hand, holding him for a moment longer.

"Y tú también, Adamova," Sebastian coyly smiles, casting a flirtatious light across his dark olive complexion and deep brown stubble lining his beautifully square jaw.

His circulation tempts itself to travel lower.

"Por favor, siéntate..." he gestures to one of his guest chairs, sitting on the corner of his desk.

Sebastian's small, dark brown eyes spark.

"Gra—ah," Sebastian stops himself, chuckling, lifting a finger off the dark leather strap and pointing it in the air, "I suppose we *keep* our conversations to English from now on? It *would* help..."

He pauses to remove his unconventional briefcase from around his buttoned-down, ash gray suit shirt, smiling an elegant yet unguarded and rather boyish-looking grin.

“With American slang after *your* tour there,” he softly groans, sitting down in the nearest guest chair.

“Ah, yes...” he stands, enjoying Sebastian's enticing affectation.

Instinct insists he sit behind his desk.

But he glides forward and sinks back into the other guest chair’s tufted leather cushion.

“I actually...” he chuckles to himself, resting his elbows on the mahogany arms and crossing one knee over the other. His hands fold together in his lap, “ *Found* myself bragging about you and your insights on Borges to a friend in the literature department at Monash University in Melbourne since we last *saw* ...”

He wears a semi-inviting cocked grin, allowing his gaze to flicker with discretion.

Sebastian’s eyes spark wildly, his testosterone and serotonin ablaze.

“Each other. However...” he clears his throat, quickly looking down that ash-gray column of shirt buttons.

It is difficult not to imagine tearing them from his chest, to sink down in front of Sebastian and liberating him from his jeans, taking all of him into his mouth. Just when his heart has firmly cemented itself as Will’s, does the rest of his body resist.

Sebastian takes a deep, knowing breath, smiling a brighter smile across his sharp cheekbones.

“Melbourne *might* lack in film industry and celebrity culture, but I believe your “Borges as Political Animal” *may* be in a kind of bidding war between UCLA and Monash...”

And Sebastian stares back, shocked, softening his aroused pupils with curiosity.

“It seems *you* might have to be the deciding factor, querido niño...” he looks through his window with nonchalance, wishing he could see the comforting San Jorge from here, “All you have to do is say the word. I will send you the information following my 4:00 meeting.”

“I...”

He looks back, feeling his chin lift in the air.

Sebastian blinks a gentle, stunned scoff, raising his dark brown eyebrows onto his lovely, tall forehead.

“Mierda! I had no idea!”

“I *do* apologize for imposing...”

“No, no, shit!” Sebastian laughs unguarded, shining an even more vibrant smile and gesturing over to him, “ *I* should be complimented *you* professionally *brag* about me.”

“Shall I over your gifts in other areas as well?" he smirks, feeling nothing but a poignant kind of gaiety that sets the air between them on fire.

Sebastian cheekily shifts his chiseled, shadowed jaw, his dark brown eyes twinkling as if in an acknowledging reply.

“Th-there *is* the question of...” he chuckles, thoughtfully raking his fingers through tousled gelled dark brown waves, “Intercourse. Intellectual or otherwise...”

“My dear Sebastian,” his voice smiles, fighting the urge to reach for that enviable hand running through his hair, “I *know* you will have no problem charming anyone whether in established chapels or chance meetings.”

Sebastian grins, filling in the slight sallowness of his cheeks and flexing the artistry of his 5 o’clock shadow.

And *he* feels nothing but everything all at the same time.

“I … I *suppose* ...” Sebastian strokes his fingers down his chin, looking into the near distance over his neat and organized desk, “I really should talk this over with Camila first...”

“Naturally,” he graciously nods.

“And it *would* be nice to stay in a hemisphere closer to her...”

"Of course," he looks down at his name plate, somewhat satisfied.

Silence starts to deafen.

He welcomes it despite its lack of addictive, electrifying passion.

Warm, wordless fingers curl around the inside of his elbow.

“Mi querido Adamova...” Sebastian shivers, stroking his thumb across his arm.

He smiles to himself and turns with a startling, vibrant grin.

A pair of small, upturned, dark brown eyes glow rather hazel in the bright afternoon sun, softly stained with rife suggestion and genuine affection. For a brief moment, it almost breaks his heart to hurt the poor boy.

“I shall miss you, in either case.”

“In a less *virtual* capacity, my boy...” he chuckles, patting Sebastian’s knuckles.

Some incentive from his wife and perhaps incidental flirtation should be enough to stimulate the young man into choosing Melbourne over UCLA. But he is resolved, despite the tiny smile quirking the corners of his lips devoted to only Will.

His veins softly crack as he becomes even more disappointed in himself, the playfulness almost evaporating and what remains is but an empty, shallow, but no less delightful sweetness.

“In a capacity that will benefit us both,” Sebastian flashes an even charming smile, tilting his tousled brown waves and scoffing a tiny, awkward chuckle, “P-professionally for *myself* anyway...”

“And *my* benefit?”

“To whomever it is who owns your heart.”

He elevates his chin into the air, slanting his head with more interest than surprise. And he realizes he is already standing despite the subject, walking around his desk.

Sebastian’s scent piques with some nerves.

“I … I *do* apologize, Adamova...” his anxious-sounding voice pitches a bit higher than his lower, grainy tenor, the kind consideration of his feelings an odd, gentle compliment, “I hope I did not speak too out of term...”

“No, no, my dear Sebastian,” he gently groans, sliding down into the fine contours of his chair and interlacing his fingers on top of his desk, “I am glad *someone* outside of my mind other than the party in question has observed this. I must ask...”

A chuckle leans him back against firm but gentle leather and tufted buttons, quirking an amused grin.

Sebastian starts to breathe much calmer, a rush of dopamine coursing off his skin.

“ *What* gave it away?”

“The last time we *saw* ...” the boy playfully grins into his eyes, impetuously turning his head and flexing his thick, dark eyebrows. And he adores this, yearning to have spent more time with this side of Sebastian’s personality, “Each other, as it were.”

The motif barely warms his bones or stimulates arousal.

“Th-the *more* I took care of *you* ...” Sebastian smiles with some humility, his wistful, half-sparkling gaze and the gentle light spreading across his face almost reliving that night.

A smirk couldn’t quite reciprocate, given his memories of disassociating.

“The more distant you seemed. I …” a soft breath wafts from thin, open lips, long eyelashes narrowing towards bright, hazel-brown oceans, “I … I wasn’t entirely sure until you shaped your mouth, like you were starting to say someone else’s name but stopped yourself.”

The amused smile on his face sinks.

He remembers the ecstasy of nose cartilage and breath rustling against forestry, lost in beautiful, secondhand effort. And an effort that would never be fulfilled by his heart's desire, no matter how detached or enthralled by another pair of capable hands.

Will had spent all Saturday and Sunday morning at the Senguerr, awkwardly mumbling on his way out that catfish and perch were coming in droves from the Colhué Huapi.

He contented himself with traipsing through all the local farmers' markets until noon both days, a remarkably well-behaved Río in tow, remaining relatively present considering the circumstances. Yet distant nerves twitch like delicate harp strings, tempting him into distraction, into surges of streams of consciousness. And a smile has often betrayed him in the memory of Will's receptivity, his warm lips almost invitingly leaning into his, the comfort of a firm arm wrapped around his waist.

Negotiation *would* be on the other side of this impasse.

But negotiation also reveals fragility, a fragment forcibly surrendered in the mosaic of self.

He returned around lunch-time both days, gently perturbed by the rather taunting, sun-stained walls of his Castillo Lagos Simetricos murmuring an encouraging hymn. But conveying blatant, *lexical* vulnerability has never been his strong suit. He has always existed between the lines, with end-stopped commas breathing organic breath for interpretation to flourish amid carefully crafted stanzas.

And it is expected of *him* to destroy the illusion of his communication style, to be the one who breaks, to reveal himself, to be the one who abandons himself to the Western world's paradigm of validating another's idealistic subjectivity.

2 ½ sodium thiopental tablets reinforce this claim.

William Graham is his weakness.

And Will knows this now.

And what are the chances that his weakness would be imposed on *him* ? The chances of more brazen flirtation or the delicious heat of a softly breathing kiss almost brushing his lips and taking advantage of a split second of abandonment? He still wants Will, despite the battles waged within his principles, to become purified through participation and the expression of wholehearted effort.

"And what is this someone else like, cariño mío?"

He chuckles, grinning down at his closed laptop and dark-green desk pad, unsure of how to express all that is Will Graham, or rather, Daniel Lavigne on his latest passport.

He rolls his tongue across the name, preventing his birth name from falling out.

"Attractive, of course..." Sebastian quips affectionately, wincing a teasing grin across beautiful, hazel-tinted brown eyes and lacing his fingers on top of his denim-clothed knee

cap, crossing one over the other, "I would expect nothing less from your tastes. Th-that is, i-if I m—”

He stops himself with a half-sheepish grin, blinking almost shamelessly down onto his desk.

“I am embarrassing you, Adamova, I ap—”

“Quite attractive...” he feels an effortless smile lift his lips, leaning his weight against his elbows and interlaced fingers. “I *do* apologize, Sebastian. I have never been blessed with the honor of having companions to truly speak my heart to. And yet, *despite* the vexatiousness of the situation, I am not entirely sure I can put words to where my needs lie.”

His eyes blink down at his MacBook’s stark, white apple symbol, stunned with himself.

“I have loved the man in my own way for many years...” and his affectionate smile grows as his gaze softens, realizing it easy to let loose another carefully crafted line, “Despite the fact that he has repeatedly broken my heart and I, his many times. He and I have walked through hell and victory together, and I have always been grateful for his friendship. I have always put his needs before my own, and yet my inconvenient love and my occasional, unrequited lust continues as before. I have learned to live with it.”

Soft panic ripples through his hunter’s instincts, worried he may have said too much. And what he has disclosed does seem ludicrous from an internal, objective viewpoint.

He stands, turning to look out the window behind him.

A bright Argentinian sun glitters against the Golfo San Jorge’s bright afternoon blue waves. And with each recurrent cadence, its brilliant golden gleam shines even stronger.

The rhythm attempts to soothe this irritating love sickness plucking at his harp strings.

But with oceans and golfos separating them from Baltimore and now fully isolated and immersed in the problem, it is becoming clear to see what they have become and who they are to one another.

“So, you choose noncommittal lust with a stranger...” Sebastian quietly muses, his smooth and thoughtful accent raising a soft chill up his spine.

He folds his hands behind his back, continuing to look out the window.

“He must be rather heterosexual.”

“Heterosexual by breeding...” he hears himself affectionately chuckle, resisting the growing amusement in his voice, “Although serotonin and reactive mannerisms may imply otherwise.”

“There *are* ways to find out...” Sebastian draws out, sounding even more entertained. And warm, spiced cologne and faint notes of sweat breathe upward behind him, “You *could* always just kiss him. I’m assuming blatant, honest communication only gets you so far.”

He scoffs a tiny smile, tempted to point out he almost did.

“And yet I cannot bring myself to be so vulnerable...” comes out with a startling ease, feeling even his harp strings shapeshift into cello strings.

Deeper notes of leather and a nicer aftershave waft around his desk, walking up next to him.

“That frustrating, beautiful man sees through me as much as I have seen through him...” and a waft of stilled cello strings breathes outward in just as much comfort and astonishment.

The silence deepens.

And the lovely, scholarly reticence continues for what feels like many minutes.

Loud conversation echoes and footsteps squeak up and down the hallways outside his door.

““To fall in love is to create a religion that has a fallible god...”” Sebastian draws out with a gentle, thoughtful hum, and his accent cannot sound more beautifully and addictively melancholic.

He turns.

Sebastian presses his weight against his arm leaning on the window frame, half-wistfully smiling out to the water.

““I can give you my loneliness, my darkness, the hunger of my heart..."” he starts to smile brighter, breaking the somber storm clouds and lifting his other fist to balance on his hip, “I am trying to bribe you with uncertainty, with danger, with defeat.”

He reaches for smoother stubble accentuating his square jawline.

Sebastian faces him, beaming a radiant hazel-brown smile.

“I shall miss our connection, my dear Sebastian, of course, in a face-to-face capacity.”

“Yes, I shall miss you too, mi llave...”

His lips gravitate to a lovely, fuller bottom lip and it widens under his influence. A warm, wet flood of coffee and salad-stained breath tumbles out, humming with soft approval.

A soft groan rumbles deep in his throat, feeling a hot touch wrap around his shoulders.

Sebastian sharply breathes out of his nose, the crisp, gentle air tickling his face.

He delves deeper despite his better judgment. And if he had more than a half-hour until his appointment, he would start walking backwards towards his couch while unbuckling Sebastian’s belt. It *would* be a poetic goodbye.

Sebastian presses against him, purring an addictive noise.

And he is powerless to resist his already-forming erection.

Sebastian Castillo is a magnificent creature, and his wife and all future consensual partners are a lucky breed. But a deep part of himself has always secretly wished and yearned for monogamy, if it were ever possible. If it were not for his heart's capacity and Sebastian's wife, he would not have met anyone who could compete with the Will of five years ago.

"I..." he softly growls down Sebastian's throat, feeling unbridled heat in his cheeks, "I *do* have my 4:00 appointment, and I must meet with the teaching assistants soon..."

"Sí, sí, of course," Sebastian shivers into his mouth, taking a step back.

He drags his thumb across the rather underwhelming soft stubble covering an even smoother cheek. His touch seems to cause a blinding light to shine from behind Sebastian's gorgeous, deep olive complexion.

"You are an extraordinary man, Adamova Ivanova..." His hazel-brown eyes spark with every word.

He smirks, brushing across that bright glow.

Sebastian shivers at the touch.

And circulation begins to flow further away from his groin.

"I … I only w-wish..." he shudders against the grain of his intonation, standing straighter although a lustful stain of pink remains unextinguished in his slim cheeks, "I met you before Camila gave me her heart."

"And I, you, my dear boy..."

He inhales a sharp breath, leaning into Sebastian's amber-scented body heat and kissing the top of a beautifully sculpted cheekbone.

Sebastian softly huffs.

He nestles against a firm temple, hearing nothing but residual lust taking its time evaporating from his own bloodstream and Sebastian's slowly recovering breath and heartbeat.

"H-however, what is worse," he pauses, nuzzling deeper against that thin skin, "I believe I have *truly* fallen in love with my roommate this time."

Sebastian chuckles and its gentle tremor rocks his forehead, and warm, scholarly hands slip down his shoulders and take his gently sweating hands.

"To be *fair* , Adamova, *I* believe you always were."

Chapter 10

The Lago Musters sighs, its cooler morning air traveling down bare skin.

Its fingerprints slide through chest hair, eliciting a wave of goosebumps.

Nipples perk against its breath.

And a flat, deeper gold sunlight slowly reveals itself through closed eyelids, almost as if evoking an anxious sunrise or the sun still under the influence from an early morning downpour, similar to yesterday's late afternoon drizzle.

A soft hum runs off the back of his throat, eyelashes twitching together.

Luciferic glory burns even hotter through blood vessels.

He is much more aligned, a powerful sense of himself peacefully living alongside amplified senses with neither party vying for his full attention. *This* is a warmer sunlight than what is beyond closed eyes, rooting him even deeper inside his old bones and into a self he has not been in some time.

Lips already press together in silent acknowledgment.

A faint rain shower slides down his face, diluting the fresh spray of spat blood painting his lips. He deeply chuckles and licks his mouth, the ecstatic, anemic but watery taste of copper sharp on his tastebuds. He rams his knee into the man who cut him off on KM 162's face once more, happily shuddering as another wave of goose bumps freckles his body.

It was magnificent.

But he restrains himself, applying his emergency bottle of chloroform.

He intends to savor this.

And the rude truck driver rife with road rage is still in the basement, awaiting retribution.

An unguarded erection blossoms, brushing the overhead blankets.

A gentle spring breeze blows across skin. And he shivers, uncertain if it comes from this lake-scented breath or this new but old sense of self or his own ecstatic whimsy.

His cellphone glides into his pocket, gently smirking down at the unconscious 50-year-old man in pure red-hot ecstasy and imagining the possibilities, still silently simmering for having lost an hour and a half of Will's company at home.

And it is surprising to believe that Will actually *agrees* to discard the truck somewhere while its driver heads in the opposite direction. And he didn't consider a single one of their issues or even Will's obvious principle-driven disinclinations! It just happened, beautifully

synchronous and alive with engagement, or, as much engagement as Will will allow himself. Rapture flares through him regardless, daring to ignite every part of his being with something far more carnal.

But the question lies in Will's willingness, or rather, *his* unyielding trust in Will's assumed eagerness.

He deposited the driver in the basement.

And he cleaned up, surrendering to his happy exhaustion and gravitating to making dinner. A Russian salad and matambre arrollado accompanied by homemade chimichurri sauce were prepared just as enthusiastically as shattering the driver's nose.

There was still an itch.

It kept churning in his veins, blind, wild consternation, a quarter-terrified that Will could still take the truck to the policía. He proceeds to make dinner, happily ignorant of any anticipation beneath skin, hating himself for even questioning the boy.

But concern still itches.

Will and Río come home just as the rain has lifted, and the sky overlooking the westward Lago Colhué Huapi is transforming into a lovely, atmospheric, damp ochre.

However, self-hatred persists.

He chuckles down at that silly face and tossed a small piece of freshly cooked "steak" on the floor, silently relieved. Río happily drifts over to it, her identification tags clinking a wild tap dance as she sniffs at it. She tilts her head and smiles up at him, but something in her large, brown eyes looks rather concerned.

He affectionately grinned, gesturing down to his offering.

With that, she sniffed it again and scooped it right up.

Río sat back on her haunches, widely grinning as she chewed and waited for another.

Will dropped his keys onto marble with a gentle clink.

His hands silently raise into the air down to the Chilean Terrier as if to say "not right now, maža mergaitė." And if he were not already preparing dinner, he would have apologetically scratched her face for extra measure.

'Dumped in the San Jorge,' Will nodded to himself, reciting as if from a mental checklist.

He looks up from chopping vegetables, silently raising a chastising eyebrow.

And Will grabs his dirty keys, raising his hands in the air in playful surrender.

A gleam of amusement glints, blinking back down to his work.

Will *has* become even more lively, in his own way, this week.

He silently prays and hopes Will has, at last, found an equilibrium within his transformation, that he is closer to an unseen victory he will not see himself, but *will* experience through his daily choices. He barely demonstrates any resentment for his *own* lack of participation. However, Will *does* deserve *some* semblance of boundaries and *he* will continue to hold the reigns much differently than in Florence with Bedelia.

But the boy has become *much* more relaxed than he has been since before the Red Dragon's fall, and even *he* is overcome with secondhand consolation.

And Will's chrysalis may or may not have started to exquisitely shatter.

'License plates currently in possession, *will* ...' he sarcastically raises his eyebrows with a huff, saluting his keys into the air with a soft jingle, "Melt them down later."

He would have reached over and kissed the boy with every ounce of passion churning in his veins, with or without a countertop or dinner prep between them.

He shifts against bedsheets.

Egyptian cotton cascades across naked contours, shivering into its achingly smooth texture. His erection swells even more, uncertain if his arousal comes from texture or the absolute ecstasy of Will's participation and the lack of complaining.

Ghostly consternation attempts to rebuke him.

Warm, breathing lips lean in, their soft texture almost grazing his.

He deeply inhales, catching the combination of his own thick, heady testosterone and balmy lake-scented air, plunging his cheek into a sea of long, smooth fringe and feeling his spiked blood flow coursing down his stomach.

His steady breathing starts to teeter, the soft echo of hair shifting across the pillowcase.

The gentle zip of sheets across widening thighs.

He already traces a blind path down his ribcage with a lukewarm touch, slipping under the blankets around his waist.

A soft noise murmurs at the thought of Will's mouth.

Will's unquestioning participation.

His head swims, lost in the addictive pleasure between silky texture and blushing dopamine.

And he intends to enjoy this even if it means prolonging exploration before pursuing blind, passionate accomplishment. The same could be said for wanting to savor vindicating the truck driver before ultimate completion.

Finger prints glide across a blissful swell, a nerve happily zinging approval.

They savor finer hair until its pleasurable path dissipates.

He hears his breath waft even shallower, pinching his eyes shut.

Touch trails even slower across satin.

It continues toward rough, rippling folds.

His breath catches, melting even deeper into his bedsheets.

A steadier, red wine-tasting breath echoes hotly down his throat, capturing another lake-scented exhale mingled with a rush of grass. His entire body shudders, exhaling and discovering gentle notes of breakfast at the end of its trail.

An index finger print takes playful advantage of rugged, sensitive skin. Another hand already dances down warm, xylophonic ribs, blindly reaching over his body for the nightstand drawer.

He hums and rolls over onto his stomach, continuing to joyously revel in his own touch.

Nipples shift across his sleepily warm outline carved into gray bedsheets while shoulder blades and lower back cool to lukewarm, watery air. He blindly retrieves the plastic bottle, detecting an even tinier noise filling his pillow.

Lips nearly brush cotton; warm, dulce de leche-stained breath leaning in even closer.

And he is *irrevocably* hard.

He turns onto his back, flipping the lid open with his teeth.

The click echoes.

A thin, wiry wavelength follows.

Cautious, raw touch sinks in.

He softly gasps, his gentle whine weaving around this frequency stained with rejuvenated spring soil and the Lago Muster or Colhué Huapi. And yet, his body silently begs for a type of tactile spiritual relief that self-pleasure cannot and will not entirely rectify or surpass.

He widens his legs, shivering at the sharp gasp between skin and blankets.

One foot slides up bedsheets and then the other, each erogenous spot and arch achingly wanting.

He props his neighboring pillow underneath him with a shaky sigh, his kneecaps growing even more aware of the overhead sheet.

His teasing fingers abandon their task, almost violently trembling with neglect.

He takes a deep, steady breath, exercising some self-restraint and anointing himself with the heaven of cool, organic coconut oil twice over. His lips click apart, softly gasping at the slick expectation against his fingers.

And flesh is already shivering even harder.

A kinesthetic snapshot of how he has imagined Will's alley-way encounter stares at him behind closed eyelids, accidentally rendering him even harder. Even though the image helps, he tries to push it aside in order to enjoy what he has rarely allowed himself for the past three years.

He drops his head back, sliding a loving finger into himself.

His back gently arches, hearing a strangled, soft groan escape from his lips.

It continues to seek awareness.

And sharp recognition fights back.

He softly pants, placing his free hand onto a softly sweltering ribcage, silently noting the perfect, gentle strain and leaking dousing soft, groomed hair. And fingers curl around ribs with a heated grip, blissfully lost in the hot staccatos of awakened, punctured nerves and uneven, breathier huffs.

With time and skill, tautness begins to loosen.

Another effortlessly slips in.

He tilts his chin even higher into the air, shakily gasping and tasting an addictive, earthy exhale. Goosebumps surge and scatter across every inch of docile and erogenous skin, creating a surprisingly powerful but discernible kind of arousal.

He huffs tiny, wanting noises, even more courageously scissoring himself open.

But he deliciously whines even louder, burying his temple into shampoo-scented bangs and silently loving the slowly drying fight and burn.

Offense zigzags even deeper.

But the fight is won with time; widened and quivering.

He slightly spills over, the heat and smell of Will and his espresso-stained breath tilting towards his.

Brighter, coppery sunlight streams into closed eyes, and he hears his own desperate cries from a gentle distance. He thankfully draws out of himself, rooting against the steady rhythm of his fingers, quietly enjoying blinded knowledge of each inner muscle and the range of every trembling muscle and nerve's irritability.

They slide in deeper, melting away his memories associated with this proclivity.

But the thought of Will entering him...

"Fuck..." he softly groans, savoring the fullness inside himself.

Goosebumps prickle up his legs, heavier gusts of dopamine and testosterone wafting in on the pungent air whether from the thought or newfound passion. Secure, firm fingers continue to take more pleasure in the journey than the destination, stretching obscenely soft lining just enough.

He gently pants, rolling his head back and palming a neatly pruned nipple.

A tinier burn retaliates.

He whines a little higher behind closed eyes, lifting his ass and grinding against his fingers. Painfully addictive friction ignites forest fires beneath skin, the heavy, glazed bounce brushing up his lower abdominals content to be ignored for now.

And heavy, broken groans fall out unguardedly, his chin lifting to vaulted ceilings.

He hoists himself even higher, indulging for just a second longer.

Slim, meaty flesh retreats to the soft pillowcase, returning to softly electrocuted senses.

He gently purrs, biting into his bottom lip and blissfully observing the intersection between sensitivity and texture. Goose bumps shoot up his gently sweating lower back, deeply groaning a shaky sigh in disbelief over how long he has gone without this kind of pleasure.

His fingers press against his ribs, choosing to reach for the coconut oil.

And all is remedied but less slick; he almost prefers this.

Acuity almost succumbs to the fantasy of Will fucking him.

He finally grazes his bundled target, and it’s nearly impossible *not* to imagine Will.

He quietly whimpers, dropping his head further back and pulling out.

They smoothly re-enter.

He shakily exhales, feeling his swollen weight bouncing against his stomach to the relentless tempo. A gentle, electrical surge beams through his testicles, silently teasing the need for completion.

His fingers abruptly pull out, lingering close by.

He draws a sharp, deep breath, enjoying the ghostly burn across his quivering, half-resisting nerves.

And a gently sweating, gasping Will thrusting into him, firmly gripping his hips.

They dive back in a bit more forcefully.

A tinier nerve observes the intrusion, clamping around his fingers.

He indulges a third with a soft mewl, filling himself to the brim with some raw fight. A louder, needier noise is already vibrating from his lips, the texture warm through his mouth.

He pulls all three out with a little more care, plunging directly against himself.

And Will's hot hands gripping his hips, wrapping his long legs around the boy's waist and lovingly pulling him in even deeper.

Even more anticipating arousal glazes his stomach.

And cool air breathes across his ass, not realizing he has lifted himself for deeper access.

He is already mewling even louder, his trembling orgasm on the horizon.

But he pauses to catch his breath, feeling his cheeks hot and his heart racing.

His lips close, swallowing the dryness caking the back of his throat.

Even his fingers wiggle inches away from his prostate but remain submerged and violently pinched, every shaking nerve exploding like otherworldly fireworks. And he wants this moment to last forever, breathing through open lips so heavily his lungs feel like they are on fire, consumed by the fine line between spiritual rapture and impatient mind and senses.

A soft knock echoes off his door.

He shivers, feeling his head swim inside *and* outside his body.

A quiet sigh fills the air.

Movement crinkles.

And numb, softer movement crinkles, gliding sensitive skin down onto his pillow.

His lips close with a smirk and he catches his breath, removing his fingers abruptly. But he finally opens his eyes, thickly swallowing, and his half-sated nerves welcome the burning agitation through the not-quite orgasmic haze, wishing he could linger in this electrical ecstasy for a few more minutes.

He shakily sits up, reaching for tissues in his nightstand drawer.

They rectify his fingers and the clinging, lingering dew.

He grabs his robe with a less affected hand, tossing the multiple sheets of tissues into the neighboring small trash bin with the other. He stands with a mild tremble in his knees, finishing tying the deep blue belt around his waist and believing it poor judgment to reach for the doorknob without washing his hands first.

But he opens his door, seeing nothing but the sun-drenched oak railing overlooking the foyer.

The light smell of steak and eggs permeates the whole, rather still house and there is no sign of anyone having knocked or scratched on his door. Instead, a breakfast tray adorned with silver cloche enclosed dishes and glasses of orange juice and coffee sits at his feet.

His eyes are already squinting and lips softly parted with surprise and curiosity, gravitating down to the note card sitting at the head of this spread.

“I have a proposition for you, Hannibal.

You prepare your weekly Friday night meal and *I* the breakfast the next day?”

He shakes his head, pleasantly surprised, chuckling into the deafening silence.

He brushes long side fringe off a sweat-glazed cheekbone, smiling down at the breakfast in bed.

While this is hardly surprising, this is a reminder of the Will Graham he once knew, especially towards those he is comfortable around. If he knows any better, his heart flutters, stunned and yet not all at the same time. And perhaps this is a choice illuminated by secondhand experience; what he must be deprived of for the sake of creating a healthier boundary for Will, who must be struggling towards compromise as well. This is a sign.

Will Graham is on his way into recovery, however long and arduous it may be, and he is proud.

And some of the extra, unrollable pieces of steak from last night waft into the already fragrant air.

He closes his eyes and nervously inhales the scent, hoping William did it justice.

Soft, short hair brushes past a naked shin.

And it *is* sufficiently pan-fried.

He smiles and opens his eyes, carefully picking up the tray, even more proud of the boy.

He turns with a soft hum, noting a soft prismatic beam emanating from one of the cloches and a happily smiling Río at his feet.

She playfully scampers backwards with the widest, welcoming smile, her identification tags loudly clinking and her white nub of a tail wagging a million miles a minute.

The tray sits on his bed, knowing Río *has* learned not to leap where she has not been invited.

Despite being glad he doesn't have to worry about her, he quickly washes his hands, puts on some silky briefs beneath his robe, and wipes down everything he has touched since his almost-climax anyway. Río continues to sit where he found her in the middle of his room, that tail unyielding and enthusiastically watching his every movement, the reputation of her training preceding her.

He finally sits, lifting the breakfast tray across his lap and opening one cloche and then two more.

Dark brown eyes stare up at him, her panting even heavier.

He cuts into the steak, deeply smelling and observing Will's artistry at reheating.

And it *is* pink *and* hot enough.

He looks at the piece of meat on his fork with a tiny grin, feeling his head shake, silently awestruck as he places the morsel in his mouth.

His eyes close, delicately chewing, genuinely impressed.

He cuts another reheated piece, finding Will's ability to find a solution for leftovers via search engine more than adequate if he had not had prior knowledge. He opens his eyes, utensils loudly clinking and echoing through the almost deafening silence.

A white blur leaps up on all fours.

His already amused smirk lifts even higher, dropping it in her direction.

And she is appeased until the very last bite.

Before he realizes it, he is patting his mattress and gesturing to the foot of the bed.

Río stands even taller, quietly surprised and looking like she has won a medal.

"Just there for now, juokingas veidas," he affectionately sharpens his voice, following Will's instruction when it comes to commanding dogs. And yet, how little the boy knows it also works for more upright, evolved primates, a drugged one happily awaiting him in the basement like a present.

And it feels like Christmas morning again, eagerly anticipating the afternoon that lies ahead.

But the sweet Chilean terrier, however, *is* difficult to firmly instruct. Most of the time, he finds himself chuckling or smiling at her instead, firmer resolve melting away just from her innocent, silly face.

She leaps up onto his bed with just as much gusto for her love of blueberries, carefully sniffing and staking out her newly discovered territory.

He enjoys a bite of quail egg and steak together, relishing the magnificent multi-textured taste the States has almost woefully instilled into his taste buds.

But the light spaciousness between his ass cheeks still feels rather empty amidst all of this amazement. Orgasm, or rather, the lack thereof, partially half-expects a rush of serotonin and dopamine or a quaking shiver across the dry sweat on his clothed lower back. And yet, he feels rather alive, even further submerged in the strangeness of this changed yet familiar version of himself, further awakened.

Awakened, yet empty.

He takes a bite of buttered sourdough, happily sighing.

“And what do *you* have planned for today, maža mergaitė?” He chuckles, glancing up and finding Río wildly scratching her back on his ivory duvet. He cannot help but nervously wince over at her wiggly white stomach, her joyful brown and black smattered face playfully thrashing from side to side.

She pauses, dropping her head back between his feet, craning a worried dark brown expression up at him as the chestnut-colored portions of her eyebrows inquisitively lift onto her forehead.

A smirk turns into a full grin.

“No doubt...” he pauses, taking a deep sip of coffee and gently sighing to make sure Will captured the right aftertaste and every last lingering note. A few are missing, but he doesn’t mind. “Causing trouble of *some* kind. Río...”

He clears his throat, placing his coffee mug down onto the tray with a gentle, decisive tap.

“I’d hate to disappoint you, but I do not plan to visit the F-a-r-m-e-r M-a-r-k-e-ts until tomorrow. And if you would like to join me again...” he continues to draw out, slowly choosing his words and making sure not to trigger any heavy wanting.

His fork and knife cut into the smaller piece of meat, eagerly anticipating, and sensing a few goose bumps rippling across semi-delirious nerves and skin.

“Then, I will be honored to have you as my date,” he grins, sinking his teeth into the piece of meat.

A blur of white and that black and brown spot rolls back onto her stomach.

Río smiles with a cheerful pant, perking her large, black ears and revealing an even wider, tongue-bearing grin. He stops himself from physically grimacing at the possibility of saliva on his duvet. However, as Will has briefly taught him in the past few weeks, not everything can or *will* be as sanitized as before.

‘L-like having a child...’ Will mumbled and shrugged, looking back down at his iPad.

‘Walter was 11...’ slipped out of his mouth before he realized it, internally cringing but not apologizing for his accidental retort.

“I will be, ah, taking *care* of something in the basement today, Río. But if you would like to guard the basement door every now and again, I would be honored for you to be my...” He chuckles, blinking down and mopping his toast in even more yolk, “Cerberus, as it were...”

He bites into his toast with a gentle crunch, grinning over his breakfast tray.

Río tilts her head with a wide grin, and her dark brown eyes seem to twinkle as her glistening, pink tongue slips out once more and landing on his duvet.

He cringes, but it’s unavoidable.

At least there was *some* body heat in his Castillo Lagos Simetricos bed, even if it was in the shape of a sweet, neurotic canine. The Hannibal Lecter of Baltimore wouldn’t even conceive of having a dog in his bed. But the young, mostly forgotten seven-year-old version of himself would have, although he possibly wouldn’t have been as close to his sister if he had one. He often tried to count the swans as family members, never naming them but giving them rather intuitive titles of “uncle” or “aunt.”

He takes another sip of coffee, closing his eyes.

The spring wind carries the scent of lake water and a stronger bluster of the intersection between soil and grass root, and he can almost feel the child within himself although imbued in life experience somewhere in the depths of himself.

And that iota of his prior self is ecstatic that there is a dog at last in his life, that he allows her the luxury of being on his bed even if it’s rather out of character.

He rapidly blinks his eyes open, ensuring he will not fall into too much self-pity.

“Ruff...” Río cocks her head with a little more purpose, curiously lifting her black and brown eyebrows and lowering her ears to half-mast.

He chuckles, sitting his white, porcelain mug down and reaching over the breakfast tray to scratch one of those floppy, inquisitive large ears.

“Dabar būk gera mergaitė...” he smiles, rubbing the side of her neck and receiving a tiny kiss.

Compared to Río, getting Will into his bed would be a much more significant challenge, if at all possible.

He may have confessed his devotion and an inner monogamous desire to himself, but adoration does not always simply equate with selfish, carnal needs. To be *in* love is to consider the other person, for better or worse. And despite having many lovers, he, at last, can express a freer sense of the depths of his love for Will without pressuring him for sex he may not desire. The fact that Sebastian and the sodium thiopental has led to this conclusion is irrelevant, not wanting to relive the last few Friday nights.

So, Ivanova's sex life is officially dead, by extension.

He accepts this.

He looks forward to the culture of Commodoro Rivadavia for solace. It was what kept him distracted while in the States and even in Florence. There are always fascinating people to meet, galas and exhibitions, his life-long hobbies of music and drawing. But the line between aging and fastidiousness blurs whether by time or interest, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell what this Argentinian version of himself is unconsciously motivated by.

In two months, he *will* be a year away from his 50th birthday, and he is not getting any younger despite his mature but youthful physique and joie de vivre in a brand-new, unfamiliar country.

But between the introverted-appearing choosiness of aging and the accidental sacrifice of his sex life, he is doing Will an unconventional kindness that may seem absurd to a westernized eye.

A deep inhale breathes across the last of the fresh sourdough dancing across his tastebuds, sipping his orange juice and basking in the brighter sunlight pouring through the window opposite his bed, the gentle rhythm of bamboo window blinds rocking across white, wooden stools. And lake water floats just as airily, altering the smell of steak and eggs into a rather ecstatically blurred gouache.

He gazes onto a brighter Argentinian sunray, feeling his barely sated nerves vibrate.

An afternoon itinerary slowly and mentally unfolds against the soft gold streaming through light brown shades, that tiny, mental click warming nerves and muscles towards their daily appointed tasks.

Río nuzzles between his bare feet, her short, white fur tickling his ankles.

He smiles to himself, reaching around the tray to happily scratch her neck.

His hand returns, balancing against the smooth, cool porcelain handle of his coffee mug.

A shower proves to be most imminent and topping off his pleasure to the tune of a Criminal Podcast episode, however ironically. He would usually listen to Chopin or Mendelssohn in the shower, something light and airy, but Will's involvement with this podcast about the fall of the Roman Empire has inspired him to broaden his interests. And today's pleasure seems rather poetic considering the rest of his afternoon, foreseeing exacting retribution in the sound-proofed sub-basement and a few hours of acquisition research before a light, early dinner.

He also feels a quiet glass of wine and his sketchbook calling for him.

A soft nip nibbles his foot.

"Río..." accusingly slips out rather affectionately.

He finishes the last of his steak and eggs, dabbing his lips with the napkin before a smirk radiates over the spread. Utensils cross a plate with a soft clink.

But she matter-of-factly smiles and pricks up fuzzy, black ears, revealing the artistry of the dark brown folds within them, showing she had meant no harm. She sits her face down between her paws with a happy, high-pitched whine, yawning her already wide smile.

“Kvaila mergina...” he chuckles, reaching to scratch one obscenely floppy ear but his wrist is met with another wet kiss. “You’re quite affectionate this morning. I assume Will has...”

A soft chuckle echoes, conjuring a few deeper notes of coffee through the back of his throat.

“Given you an extra special breakfast or something to the effect.”

He finishes the last of his coffee and orange juice, happily sighing up to the ceiling.

Even with tempting shadows that loom on the horizon, he seems rather strangely content.

In spite of this, as long as Will and he reside together in this lake house, in his Castillo Lagos Simetricos, the soft, incessant, haunting threat of betrayal will always be present and lurking around every corner. And his stubbornness is not necessarily an obstacle to his life or existence, but armored self-preservation and protection.

He leans back against pillows with a quiet breath, closing his eyes.

An even more aggressive kiss licks his ankle bone.

He grins into the lake-scented air, blindly moving the breakfast tray to the other side of his King-sized mattress and allowing whatever more affection Río has in store for him. The instinct lightly surprises the Hannibal Lecter he was fated to become, the seven-year-old delighted.

Four paws press indents into the mattress up between his legs, hopping into his lap.

His hand lifts to scratch the side of her face, Río happily grunting as she nuzzles into his stomach.

And she jumps off the bed, walking across the bare wood floor with the sound of success against her tapping paw nails and clinking identification tags.

“Prašom, maža mergaitė...” he opens his eyes, teasingly huffing.

Her familiar soft scratch rustles against his bedroom door, and he nearly leaps out of bed, grabbing the knob despite the half-opened state of his robe. He looks down on perhaps the happiest and most carefree dog in Argentina happily weaving between his feet, making him dizzy.

"Río...” half-demandingly but tenderly slides out.

And with that, she sits between his feet, worriedly gazing up at him with a soft, high-pitched whimper.

"We do *not* scratch the good work the painters did on room doors," but his tone clearly lacks the heart to apply the needed, appropriate authority.

Perhaps Río *does* have him wrapped around one of her paws.

But to become more commanding may only dismantle the trust she already has in him, and like himself, *she* is navigating the mistrusting air pervading his Castillo Lagos Simetricos in the only and most effective ways she knows how. He cannot fault her for that any more than he can Will or himself.

He shakes his head down at her, opening the door.

“You really *don’t* know how to command her, do you?”

He blinks up, startled.

A brightly lit Will stands in front of him, his back to the white railing overlooking the brightly lit foyer, amusingly wincing and crossing his arms over his white button-down shirt. He stares pointed but calmly, shining ashy-oceanic blue eyes, turning his head as if in deep, curious study.

Río's paws and tags thump down the stairs just as carefree.

His lips pinch together, realizing he wraps his robe around himself even tighter.

Her uneven, light rhythm echoes until complete quiet.

And deep silence stands still.

And stiller.

He glances at Will’s grin growing rather amused, feeling rather peaceful despite everything.

And Will watches him, his lips stiffening with even more discomfort.

His gaze flickers into piercing, worried pupils, a sudden warm surge struggling to shake the fantasy of their intimate proximity a week ago.

“Thank you, Will,” he murmurs with a faint tremor, beaming a humble smile.

“F-for what?” Will turns with a silently knowing expression, balancing his hands on his hips with a gentle, relenting snort and nodding down to the tips of his house slippers, “Y-you’re welcome, Hannibal. B-but...”

He takes a sharp, cautious breath, a tiny glow appearing mid-blink. Softly tanned wrinkles pinch into darker folds around Will’s startling eye color, and he cannot help but be enraptured.

“Th-that’s the reason wh-why...”

He resists lingering on Will’s lips again, feeling shameless adoration and a strange, rushing sense of newness. His besieged eros begins to shine as white and pure as the open, natural sunlight across Will's shoulders, only slightly tinted by his pre-breakfast pleasure. Even still, his finger pads ache to touch those smoother, short bristles again, to study the dimple carved in Will’s chin as if it holds a language he desires to learn.

In spite of his confessions to Sebastian and the San Jorge, he *still* cannot quite convert inner beliefs into actions when around Will.

Within absolution, there is ratification.

And there *is* nothing left to lose now.

He takes a silent, deep breath, attempting to maintain his composure and almost tastes his breaking on the horizon, not knowing how it may manifest.

“I … uh...” Will clears his throat, and waves his tanned fingers in the air as though articulating the right words with an almost nervous swallow.

He motions over his shoulder and through his bedroom door, each soft sweep of poor aftershave and scented hot skin an ecstatic charge and a suggestion in the depths of his testicles.

“I … I’ll take care of those dishes right now.”

“It is not a problem, Will...” he hears his smile beam, sliding his hands into his robe’s pockets.

Light, sun-filled air prickles, pulsing with so many justified words and nuances.

But Will furrows his eyebrows, blinking down across *his* robe and house slippers and then sharply looks downward into the distance as if in a state of confusion. If *he* knows any better, he has been, for lack of a better term, cruised, albeit carefully.

He takes a quieter breath, rebuffing his silent enjoyment.

“ *I* will take care of the dishes on my way down to the basement,” he chuckles, the deep vibration echoing across his widening, observant smile. “You are dressed quite smartly for a Saturday morning, my boy.”

“Y-yeah, w-well...” Will chuckles a tiny scoff, glancing down at his tucked-in white shirt and black jeans. He lifts his pulled-down shirt sleeve, a remarkable feat if there ever was one, rubbing his fingers up a temple. “Ah, s-some of the guys asked if I could tag along for location scouting later this afternoon and promised a few beers afterwards. Probably won’t be back for some time even after your...”

He huffs, lifting a sardonic grin and crossing his arms over his chest, radiating something dark but rather approving across his gray-forming, ash blue eyes.

“Proverbial return to form?”

“Atonement, my dear Will,” slips out with a faint, sweet hitch, aroused at what looks to be another post-chrysalis feat of secondhand experience. Perhaps it had broken when he was not looking or distracted by Sebastian’s adoring, talented mouth, hating himself if it were the latter, “But I will care for the di—”

“ *I* said I’d handle them, Hannibal,” Will softly commands, gesturing his hand into the air. The delicious heat he exhales is so intense, and his arousal flickers with such a newfound fervor it's difficult for him to say no.

"OK?" he raises his dark eyebrows across his tanned, lined forehead, ensuring his authority.

“OK,” he parrots with a tiny grin, feeling rather joyfully defeated.

He could almost get used to this.

Will crosses thicker arms over his chest and smiles to himself, proud of his domestic assurance. A tiny shadow flickers across his face, almost as if he is not quite ready to receive the breakfast tray.

Nor do his partially frozen feet turn to offer it.

Lake-scented air tingles, pulsing even sharper with implication.

A shade of unresolved silence fills that airborne, watery scent.

And paler sunlight streams through the clerestory windows behind Will’s shoulders, looking even more like tall, narrow wings. And they beam a soft, progressive intensity across Will’s white shirt, and *he* is realizing he is attempting to seek atonement in its shine, in the halo-like, sun-kissed golden hue that weaves through and around brighter brown curls.

Penance pulsates through his veins, fending off desperation.

But it is *Will* who must assign him this contrition.

His chrysalis *has* begun to open in its entirety, realizing that *he* stands vulnerable on a second-floor landing overlooking a sun-drenched foyer with only a railing as a barrier. A possible, premeditated maneuver Will has inherited from the Red Dragon may just change everything.

And this time, it would be *his* fall, alone.

"Will..." he thickly murmurs, discovering he gently pinches himself inside his robe pockets and holding back any probability of begging for that penance. “Are you truly unhappy?”

“W- *well* ...” uncomfortably scoffs back down at the floor, baffled eyebrows raising as he awkwardly scratches the back of his head.

Shampoo and the natural scent of scalp and skin fill the air, wafting through his doorframe.

“I … I’m doing the best I can...” he pauses, narrowing his eyes with a slow, deep breath, cautious, thoughtful wheels casting dark shadows across his half-hidden tanned face and a brighter, extemporizing bluer light shining through his gray-shaded gaze. “An-and, li-like I said...”

Will sighs up to the ceiling, lifting his eyebrows and shoving his hands into black jean pockets, quirking the tops of his well-dressed shoulders, looking as defeated as *he* feels.

“There *are* better people here than in the States. An-and...” he begins to mumble rather contemplatively, blinking down and along the length of the oak molding. “I-if it weren’t for our injuries...”

He watches Will nervously brush a few curls out of his face with a forceful swallow, revealing even more tanned peach, bearded skin.

His heart beats faster, remembering its texture even through a sodium thiopental haze.

“W-we *should* have spread out after regaining our strength,” Will sardonically huffs louder, blinking a softly anxious gaze across the baseboard’s breadth towards his own bedroom, “B-but...”

He sighs a deeper, shakier noise, flickering short eyelashes across slate-tinted eyes until they meet his. And those endless pupils soften into a weaker iteration of their usual resolute, unapologetic expression when faced with this oft-attended impasse.

“I’ve accepted that I cannot revert back to the person I once was, and yet I’m *so* tired of blaming you daily to the point of sickness even though it *is* your fault. An-and yet...” Will grips the back of his head with a heavier breath, conjuring another gust of shampoo and even hotter, vulnerable-tasting heat wafting off of his pink cheeks. “Wi-with all of your giving me time alone and my trying to find out wh-what I want in this new life I n-never asked for...”

Thicker tears settle in the corners of his eyes.

And *he* feels his heart burst out of his chest.

“I ... I don’t know...” he whispers weakly to the floor, carefully gazing at the oak panel with a rather defeated look, sliding back and forth from his bedroom, “I-is it crazy that I feel we are becoming better friends now despite everything? I think I prefer us as we are now.”

He swallows hard, keeping his half-daring tears in check.

“An-and yet...” Will sighs, dropping one hand onto a black denim-clad hip, glancing up to the ceiling with wide, drier eyes, blinking down to meet his and gesturing. “You ha- *have* built your life on a degree of isolation, Hannibal. And I *do* ...”

Will nods emphatically, sighing down to the tips of his slippers.

“Feel like I’m infringing on your inability to compromise at times. And yet, after all we have been through, I...” he sharply huffs through open lips, shrugging his white-clothed shoulders up to the tips of longer, shaking brown curls, “ *I* cannot judge you any more than you do me.

And believe me," he shakes his head even harder with a gentle, snorting chuckle, the semi-lighthearted noise lending a welcome levity to the thicker, sunny air, " *You* have judged me."

He stands even straighter, radiating a faraway soft, surprised smile.

"I have only seen the promise in you, Will," he hears himself tremble even lower with friendly correction, returning a heartfelt smirk despite the tears coating the back of his throat. And he silently aches to reciprocate some kind of vulnerability that does not associate with his earlier sacrifice, if only for a moment.

He has never quite been one to hug like an eager, extroverted American, but would like nothing more than to embrace the poor, defeated boy, to agree that these new random interludes of deeper friendship *are* quite pleasant in spite of incessant turmoil.

He stands, conscious of his steady, poised posture in the wide-open, balconied hallway, unknowing if his previous wounds might reappear at the end of the conversation.

Will almost affectionately rolls his eyes, looking towards the stairs.

"And you have changed over the past year, my dear boy."

"That fucking chrysalis of yours?" Will teases, raising his eyebrows back in his direction.

"Hm. It is impossible to fault the art of biased perception that permeates us all, Will..." he pauses, taking in the sarcastic, ruffled depths of Will's forehead, pressing his lips together down to black slippers and digging a thumbnail deep into his thigh.

His eyes flicker back up, feeling his long fringe sliding across cheekbones.

Words better left unsaid retreat into his throat.

"Change *is* most powerful when applied to small, everyday actions that may snowball into significant, life-changing choices," he feels a small smile emerging from his eyes, its warmth radiating through his bedroom doorframe as he pinches himself. "And your daily choices *have* been evolving in remarkable ways, Will. B-but..."

He blinks over to one of those tall, portrait-shaped wings over Will's shoulder.

Sunlight streams golden light down the pale, high wall onto the front door's oak header, and its height flashes through him as a reminder of how far he may fall. And there is comfort in its soft, auric glare glittering down a sea of white paint, words beginning to appear on the tip of his tongue as the courage to speak them starts to burn in his stomach.

"Ha-has jealousy towards Sebastian been one of those choices?"

"I didn't know he had a name..."

"Will..." he semi-chastises, unable to look back at the boy.

A sigh erupts, a white shoulder in the foreground flexing downward with it.

“What have we become, Will?" slips from his lips before he could even pinch himself, and yet it feels quite pleasant to loosen his tongue. But to *completely* loosen his tongue is to surrender the absolute truth of his heart, to disregard Will’s more platonic needs and find themselves at an even more impossible impasse.

He carefully swallows, almost mournfully blinking over into bluer eyes.

Will flickers up at him at the same time, glancing back down at the tips of his house slippers. Darker brown curls fall further across his face, thoughts flitting across tanned skin like Wayang shadow play.

A soft, tender noise falls from behind closed lips.

He observes Will groaning, pulling his hair back, revealing his sun-kissed, half-haggard downcast complexion and the delicate chiaroscuro of shadowed thoughts, lost in their unspoken and indecipherable languages that he may not ever master.

And yet, he *knows* he is conquered.

And Will *must* know he is conquered as well.

A dark curl escapes from his grip and tumbles against the apex of his cheekbone, something in its movement causing his heart to ache.

Deeper silence envelops the hallway.

A distant, familiar tinkling echoes up the stairs.

Río’s low bark specific to the red-bellied squirrel that visits the backyard often growls.

“I …” Will breathes even more heavily, rapidly blinking with a quick shake of his head and leaving his bereft rounded lips open, at a clear loss for words, “I honestly *don’t* know in *what* capacity I *was* jealous, H-Hannibal...”

He stiffens, realizing his heart swells even tighter.

Will clears his throat, his tan Adam’s apple bobbing against its tide. A gentle waft of coffee emanates from his nostrils, an even more uncomfortable gaze meeting his.

And he cannot stop staring.

Eyebrows crinkle towards their lashes half-concealing a brighter flash of gold furrows, something in Will’s face stilling as a deeper shadow passes across it.

“F-fucking stop all this digression and maiuetics, Hannibal!” Will clenches his jaw and tightly narrows his gaze, fury bursting from nowhere and yet everywhere at the same time.

He still cannot help but stare, feeling a delicious, bolting charge of electricity.

“I *know* we are both unhappy with whatever this dynamic is now, what it *needs* to be, b-but I *honestly* ...” Will raises his frustrated voice higher, blowing his gaze out even wider and grabbing the back of his head. “Don’t even *know* what my part in all of this *really* is! *Y* - you...”

He lets out a deeper breath, closing his tear-stained eyes to the floor and turning his head to one side, focusing his anger. A sharp inhale slides inward as he grabs the darker brown curls falling across his grinding jaw, pulling them back as if in an attempt to ground himself.

“You *admit* that you are *in* love with me in the only way you know how, and yet you so eagerly focus your attention elsewhere. You *stare* at me like you *still* want to ravage me after all these years...”

Will silently shakes his head as their eyes meet, wildly blinking his tear-filled eyes and lifting bereft-looking eyebrows onto his tanned forehead, raising a current of gentle lines up to his hairline.

A huff flows between bewildered, rounded lips.

“An-and yet you don’t even *try* to take advantage of the situation when it *does* present itself? What do you need from me, Hannibal?!" he implores, glaring a narrower, mournful look, and *he* cannot conceal how hard he pinches himself from inside his robe pockets. "I-if you have known me at all, you *know* I can’t stay fucking passive for too long. I’m *tired* of constantly soul-searching for something that isn’t 100% *my* responsibility!”

Tears sting his already blurry vision, unable to look away.

“I’m *tired* of crying myself to sleep at night!” Will shouts, wincing his even more golden eyes as angry pupils seem to stare straight into his soul. “Seriously, Hannibal. What *do* you *fucking* need me for, other than keeping me alive and to use me like a ball of string to your heart’s fucking content?! I know you kindly torture those you care about in your own demented way, but I’ve *fucking* had it! Y-you b-bring me...”

Will wildly shrugs, disrupting the almost ethereal light on his shoulders.

And every word is a warranted knife into his heart, another unfallen tear in his glazed eyes.

And he realizes his breathing has become erratic, his lungs burning with adoration.

“Here, but when you’re *not* cooking or working, *I* can’t help but think you are actively avoiding me even *after* I have mostly cooled off,” he sharply grumbles, dropping one hand with a soft clap onto black denim and balancing his fist on his hip, pinching the bridge of his nose with the other, “ *I* find myself having realer conversations with a *drugged* Hannibal Lecter an...”

The fingers pinching his face flail into the air, blinking half-quenched fury even wider.

“And *look* how well that *first* time turned out!!”

He struggles to break eye-contact as warm, betraying tears slides down his face, feeling his heart breaking. And yet his entire body continues to hum, intoxicated by that beautiful boy's blameless, divine frustration, young lover-status beauty transforming into handsome, righteous masculine anger, justified in his emotions.

Perhaps he has broken under the shadow of Will's transformational response, or perhaps Will has broken for him instead, still rooted in unyielding empathy.

But penance *is* still due.

"So, h-how can I *not* come across as jealous?!" Will nearly screeches, gesturing his palm even higher before silently dropping it to his side. "An-and it *certainly* doesn't help that you *clearly* have needs that I..."

He pauses with a firmer shake of his head, leaving his eyebrows on his forehead and baffled lips open.

And *he* watches every second of this, fiery though fearful arousal igniting deep in his stomach.

"I cannot attend to..."

Will clears his throat, squinting a pure gray flame as he looks away with a conquered shrug.

He lifts his chin in a slight nod despite the tears in his eyes, confirming his suspicions and yet welcoming Will's expanded perspective. A sober pleasure settles beneath softly agitated skin, gratified to see the argument at last manifest in the bright, open, natural light of his Castillo Lagos Simetricos, where Will is comfortable enough to express his fury without unnecessary violence.

And even though his soul aches with Will's pain, he is somehow content enough to step backwards into his bedroom, ready to dispose of the breakfast tray and take a short but thorough shower to wash away any lingering despondency, however impossible. But the world *will* continue to spin even after his afternoon absolution, tomorrow's farmer's market trip, writing the coming week's lecture.

He takes a deep breath, letting go in the deep quiet despite the resistant tremor in his chest, and is happy to receive Will as a roommate and to maintain their friendship despite *his* ever-shifting resolve. He will always love this handsome, inconstant man no matter what the Greek value of his adoration may be.

And yet, he *has* sacrificed his sex life to some Mayan fertility god.

"An-and yet..."

He curiously winces an even heavier, watery gaze.

"I … I've always wondered i-if you..." Will whispers even quieter as if to himself with a quick, contemplative shake of brown curls to one side, allowing thick silence to swallow the rest of his words.

Stillness begins to gently buzz.

He feels his heart skip another beat, wishing he could finish Will's sentence if only to himself. He aches for the days when he could see and hear everything Will would never dare say out loud; the days before Will's cliff-top admission seemed to evoke broken synchronicity and the fall to come.

Tentative hope bubbles in his veins, its loud, echoing boil wafting against his forced, slower breath.

"You do not wish to leave, then..." murmurs with even less composure from a great distance, half-wondering if this will satisfy Will's original goal of finding any trace of himself vulnerable.

He compels his heart to return to its regular rhythm.

Will breathes a soft, irritated groan, wincing as he pinches the bridge of his nose.

"I … I've told you *countless* times..." moans out with a soft scold as he drops his arm to his side with a soft, emphatic clap, glaring blazing but resigned, narrow gray eyes, "I'm not leaving you despite the circumstances and whatever it is between us, Hannibal. D-do..."

Will steps forward with a silent plea in his gaze, reaching out to touch his arm.

"Do you *not* trust me?" insistently whispers with a soft tremble, long, wincing eyelashes partially covering flaring gold furrows as fingers begin to curl around his elbow.

He cannot stop looking into inquisitively, terrified eyes, feeling his heartbeat pound through his robe.

"Do *you* not trust *me* , Will?" he restrains a tiny smirk, realizing he leans into Will's palm.

Will's thumb softly disrupts his silk sleeve.

And *he* blinks down to his house slippers without moving his head, submerged in a vast, outstretched sea of endurance and perhaps even vulnerability.

Will takes a sharp, deep breath, removing his hand.

Silk shifts back into a docile ocean.

Will's intake continues to echo, the taste a suggestion across lips.

His eyes flicker back toward Will's in the same way, struggling to maintain composure even within well-practiced poise, still feeling that palmistry as its warm apparition continues to burn gentle acknowledgment deep within muscles and nerves. And he is awashed in gently pulsing, unashamed electricity, though awaiting something yet to be identified.

Will exhales cautiously, blinking over to the staircase with a swallow.

He holds his breath, silently mourning the distance, watching the handsome contour of an Adam's apple disrupting the calm beneath sun-kissed skin, a gentle tendon quirking along with its rhythm.

Will sighs, turning in its direction.

Soft, slow footsteps punctuate across the wood floor, his quiet pulse thudding in eardrums.

Will pauses a few steps away from the stairs, lifting a crown of brown and gold curls lightly lined with gray as if he looks down at the first step. But he lingers too close to the railing, old instincts dancing through veins half-offended with refusal that doesn't *necessarily* taste like absolute rejection. And yet he cannot say he is not resentful enough to gift Will with his own fall into the foyer. Will Graham has deliberately and completely ruined him, and even *he* knows it within the depths of his being.

He, however, does not know *what* to feel.

Tanned fingers lift to sprawl across bright curls and lightly scratching the back of his head.

Will cautiously turns back around, and softer, darker concern gears across his calm yet confused, shadowed wheels as he opens his mouth to speak.

A deeper breath flexes the neat column of white buttons running down his heaving chest, flitting a nervous gaze down to the oak floor, his grip curling into his haloic, unruly hair.

And *his* judgment and penance draws nearer.

He accepts it.

He accepts all of it.

Silence envelops his lighter shoulders, one of them still vibrating with Will's touch.

And the faint buzz in his left ear grows.

And it is so quiet, he can hear his blood flow faintly spiking.

"W- *well* ..." softly erupts from Will's open, rounded lips, defeated, wide, blazing blue-gray staring directly into his eyes, shrugging his hand into the air.

He shoves his hands into black jean pockets, walking back with remarkable confidence. But he blinks, taking in *his* dark blue, silk robe, his bedroom's half-shrouded sunlight over his shoulders, everywhere and anywhere else but into *his* eyes or face.

He shivers, feeling uncertain and oddly naked, pinching himself from inside his pockets.

"Well, th-this is certainly *not* Stockholm Syndrome..." Will snorts and shakes his backlit, warm-brown curls with a soft, sardonic grin, slicing his hand down diagonally through the air twice. "B-by any means..."

“Despite its origins as a half-conscious, whisked away damsel in distress...” he hears a harmless, amused hum through his lips, avoiding chuckling or making light of Will’s previous and possibly post-traumatic concerns.

Will smoothly breathes inwards, gripping the back of his head and twisting his fingers into brighter curls, staring at the wall between their bedrooms as a half-bereft exhale steadily wafts.

He resists pinching his lips together, realizing his regretful words slowly sinking beneath skin and penance in watching Will’s hands in his hair.

And silence deepens, as quiet as moonlight on snow.

And it continues.

“I-if you are *not* leaving, Will...” he steps forward, warmly blanketed with a newer, humbler kind of Luciferic glory he has not known possible, focusing solely on handsome, complex eyes as his voice begins to shake and a gentle, cricopharyngeal spasm twitches in his throat.

A concerned flash of gold furrows meets his gaze, looking up into his eyes from an awkward angle.

A faint, acknowledging shadow traverses gentle, tanned lines and wrinkles created by age and stress, deep, clear pupils between gray-gold irises abnormally still.

“I *need* you to tell me that you *choose* to stay because you *want* to live here...”

He stops inches from the tips of Will’s house slippers.

Will drops his enviable fingers back into a black jean pocket, the tender movement conjuring dish soap and the warm, fleshy scent of pulse points. And *he* feels his mouth hungering for something far less platonic, his heart thudding a dull, unrequited ache rife with even more self-hatred.

“I …”

Will sharply exhales, shaking his head down to the floor and closing his eyes.

His stomach churns.

“I *do* want to st—I … I *choose* to stay here, Hannibal...” he murmurs to the inches between their house slipper shoes, nodding a single, emphatic nod, dark clouds gently gearing across that handsome face and narrower, pondering eyes, “ *Not* because you are insecure or offering me an ultimatum or putting words in my mouth.”

He shifts, mildly affronted.

"I... I choose to stay here..." tentatively draws out as if he prepares for a sort of epiphany, releasing the deep frown lines between his eyebrows as his tentative gaze lifts to meet his. “B-because *you’re* here and I *do* want to live here, with you despite our past. B-because...”

Will wildly blinks up at the ceiling, loudly sighing and almost sorrowfully glancing at the bare wall between their bedroom doors.

“I … I *am* building a better life than I ever could in the States under the circumstances, because w-we already have Río an-and i-it's...” Will interrupts himself, chuckling, lost in thought, gradually smiling a widening, dimple-revealing grin. And it is difficult to not smell wafting joyous, heady hormones at the mention of the queenly huntress of a Chilean Terrier.

He almost feels his own cortisol melt alongside Will’s contact high.

Will shrugs his hands into the air, speechless, and drops them down onto his thighs.

And he is blanketed, melting with the same pure serenity he experienced at the top of the cliff, unable to close his eyes in a moment of weakness and the possibility of being left with a shadow of doubt on either side of this open-balconied hallway. Tears blur his periphery, a misty border regaling the image of an observant Will grinning even brighter with an Argentinian morning sun glowing like wings against his shoulders and haloing his hair.

A tiny fragment of himself wishes he had not sacrificed his sex life.

“Al-always been my theory in life that a house isn’t truly a home without a dog,” Will huffs with a lopsided smile, raising his eyebrows with a slight, self-effacing glance, driving his hands into his jean pockets and shrugging.

And he stands even taller and broader than Special Agent William Graham of Wolf Trap, Virginia, his firm chest and thicker arms from routine fishing and recently acquired dumbbells filling out his white suit shirt in a way *he* has never seen before.

Seconds seem to tick by.

His resolve starts to melt like that quiet, moonlit snow.

And the quiet engulfs, stunned and yet pleased with what looks to be the final step outside of Will’s chrysalis. He is revealed, the caterpillar metamorphosed into the butterfly and brandishing its wings under the strength of the sun and tactile body. But with wings also comes a second-hand view of freedom, separation, liberation that will not and perhaps never will entirely involve him.

He watches Will, believing he has never witnessed his gaze remain relaxed for so long, vigilant yet serene gray, almost blue, eyes gleaming a confident gold and resembling himself but unlike himself.

Their pupils slightly dilate, a tiny, inquiring shadow skittering across facial muscles.

His heartrate begins to rise as his breath runs shallower, wondering if this truly is Will’s prophesied self, separate from canine-influenced released hormones, and if this prophesied self comes willingly towards something close to a resolution. His breath and heartbeat pounds an even heavier rhythm, watching Will watching him through slightly wider eyelids.

Will stares even firmer, taking another deep breath.

And hot, divine arousal surges against something far more mildly combative.

“An-and wh-what do you think *that* says about the situation, Hannibal?”

And it is impossible to tell whose mouth collided with whose first.

He closes his eyes, devouring the hum coming from Will's lips.

Will unevenly sighs, forcibly pressing against his.

He hears a soft, distant sound ringing from his throat, tightly gripping obscenely soft curls on the back of Will’s head. And Will is roughly opening his lips with a breathy gasp, delving in even deeper and backing him towards his bedroom or the wall, slamming him against his doorframe.

Electricity shoots through his entire body, grunting into Will's warm, wet mouth.

He digs his fingers into rough, unwashed curls, leaning even deeper into its taste and barely feeling the brunt force echoing down his spine, lost in the exquisite, loud hymn of clicking lips and deep hums.

Hot, firm touch tightly wraps around his waist, disrupting the silk across bare skin.

He cups Will's face, feeling his thumbs lingering across tear-glazed cheeks, submerged in the boy’s heavy but cool, rhythmic breath and his wildly beating heart.

Will shoves him even harder against the frame casing, biting *his* bottom lip.

He gasps even louder into Will's mouth, feeling his entire back vibrate and running his fingers through soft, rough whiskers with all the love in his heart, barely afraid to be manhandled and thrown over the railing if this is to be the outcome.

Will tilts his head to gain deeper access, the tips of noses brushing together and loud, hot moans sighs across his mouth and skin, sending shivers down his gently aching back, euphoric despite thousands of miles away and yet deep within his body.

And he knows his joyously tearful cheeks are red, that he is panting as if his lungs are aflame, and unashamed heat continues traveling down to his groin. He becomes acutely aware of thin, satiny layers, and there is no hiding his budding erection beneath his silky briefs. The intoxicating, heated scent of Will's firm, ribbed jeans stand almost too close, nearly pressing against him.

Will purrs, welcoming the gentle, ticklish hum as the heat around his waist pulls him in close.

And it is just as difficult to determine who releases whose kiss, lips wetly clacking apart.

He drops his head back onto the doorframe with his eyes closed, catching his breath.

Will groans a perfect, needy and uneven purr, sending even more circulation southward, wanting, *aching* to respond while goose bumps prickle deliriously and temples swim. A soft hum of approval is already begging for release in the depths of his throat, his hips about to rotate with an increasing need for friction at any second.

He opens his eyes, softly chuckling instead.

His eyes fill with so much love, watching his fingers stroke a fearfully clenched, bearded square jaw with such intense adoration, his heart unable to soar any higher. Even with an irrational fear of not being able to return to the way things were running hot beneath skin, he *still* cannot fall in love any deeper.

And Will's arm around his waist begins to shake.

Will blinks down into what space remains between them, rounding his open lips in an effort to slow his breathing down. Cool, rhythmic gasps faintly pulse against the sliver of bare skin between robe lapels, knowing those lips are soaked with his own, another equally affected pulse helplessly fluttering beneath his touch.

And he cannot help but shiver, unable to keep up pretense with all of his cards at their feet.

Will flickers back up to meet his gaze without moving his flushed cheeks, something in his less dilated, nervous blue eyes waiting, searching for a sign that even *he* is not quite cognizant of.

A soft, inward hitch echoes against loud, buzzing silence.

Will narrows a steadier, observant gaze and closes his lips, jagged breath retreating into nostrils.

And he *watches* Will watching him, feeling his silent panting slowly synchronizing with either Will's moon or current, unaware of who influences whom, where he begins or where Will ends. And all of this feels how things *should* be, how they should *have* been, the end result he has yearned and dreamed of for so many years.

And between soft, faint huffs tasting of breakfast and a somewhat frantic pulse still churning pink to his slim cheeks, Will Graham looks so staggeringly wrecked he has fallen in irrevocable love and lust with the boy all over again.

Will stiffens, furrowing his eyebrows as if realizing his actions.

He feels tears flood his periphery, and worried, wide blue-gray transforms into a poetic Monet canvas.

He retracts his sacrifice, without a single thought to its fateful impact on such an ancient fertility god. Despite all obstacles and unconscious sacrifices, he wants this boy, this man who has finally developed verbose exasperation and chooses to break off but not necessarily *away* from their incessant waltz. And he would have gladly made the wrong decision if it

meant he could experience what the boy felt like outside of his fantasies if only for a moment.

Anticipatory rejection lingers nearby.

And the alarm in Will’s eyes slowly dissipates.

Their softer, curious pupils continue to seek out that sign, blindly reaching one hand to cover one of his wrists still cradling Will’s face.

He swallows, the anxious gulp loud.

And subdued panic slowly overtakes what was a steady pulse, quietly cracking against firing synapses and raising a faraway scent of perspiring, salty adrenaline, dopamine already waltzing in what space exists between them. Will's jaw slowly clenches and his molars grind under the heels of his hands, an exquisite Adam's apple bobbing a slow, careful wave close to his thumb.

Will releases him, worried gold stretching across his fixed gaze.

He remains just as transfixed.

And Will barely breaks eye-contact, something in his endless, calm yet firm pupils relaxing as he traces a cautious finger over the ulnar and radial veins in his wrist.

A deep fire smolders beneath skin, the smooth touch ticklish.

He presses his lips together, resisting, happily welcoming a far tender rush of arousal.

A soft, chapped thumb rests against their crossroads, as if to check on the state of his suffering.

He feels his entire aching soul in his fingertips, sliding them off Will’s magnificent beard and slipping down past soft, grainy fingertips, meeting *Will's* wrist.

Will shakily sighs, tears slowly slicking a deeper flash of gold.

Fearful relief runs warmer, somewhat comforted by the humble knowledge that, to some degree, he *is* partially at fault for this softly pounding anxious rhythm, knowing another war is being waged within those endless pupils. And its calmer cadence begins to rise against echoing, discordant wafts, not knowing whose breath was whose, slowly pulsing through skin.

He smiles softly into Will’s eyes, dragging his thumb pad across blue-green routes.

Will takes an even deeper inhale, tensing his jaw and sweeping his short, dark eyelashes across that Monet canvas with a thick, loud swallow.

The gulp softly echoes against buzzing silence.

His gaze continues to search Will's with ever-increasing concern, and a spasm tightens around his encouragement to not dispute the reasoning or speed of their heartbeats. He feels his fingers fan down across that warm neck, entranced by its heat, tracing his thumb pad across an entrancing Adam's apple.

Will draws another heavy breath, his transfixed, half-hardened blue-gold eyes glistening with tears.

And the soft intake of what sounds like uncertainty echoes.

He steps into what space still exists between house slippers, shuffling through all of his fallen cards and looking even deeper into that beautiful, infinite gaze, with nothing left to lose.

Will straightens even taller, stiffening his shoulders with a sharp breath.

A heel almost retreats backward.

The hiss of his intake adds to that echo.

The confused and yet somewhat approving expression fixed upon him glazes with even more tears, a soft grind of his molars rendering a deep ache in *his* chest.

He stares directly into thicker tears, feeling his entire being going into repositioning his fingertips against Will's warm skin and temporal pulse point. The artery leaps with recognition, a little, deluging shock responding to no one but himself. And his hand trembles, grazing his thumb across that beautiful, square chin, quietly relishing what could be a fleeting honor.

Will blinks, sinking his gently rigid shoulders.

He smiles down at gentle, rough bristles and focuses on each finer brown and tinier silver hair against sun-kissed skin. A tear and then two more slip down into the multicolored matrix, feeling his aching heart quivering with every last ounce of his being. His smile slides even wider, adoration swelling in his chest and a tear in his eye as he inspects the lovely age in his beard, realizing he glances upward.

Pinker lips part, seeming to stare back almost daringly.

He feels his eyes soften, applying gentle pressure against Will's calmer heartbeat and slowly leaning down into the half-inch difference.

Will worryingly glares an even brighter blue, searching his lowering gaze as he takes another inhale, a tiny, sharp hitch beautifully betraying him. He grins to himself, barely distracted, carefully kissing an obscenely soft, trembling top lip.

His mouth nestles around its warmth with a hum, happy to exist against the delicious seam of Will Graham's lips. He draws back just as smoothly, keeping his eyes closed as their lips click apart.

And he is submerged, bathed, blissfully electrocuted by surging lightning bolts and absolving, staticky oxytocin floods every inch of his senses, heavily fluttering butterflies whispering “finally” as their wings slowly begin to beat a softer rhythm.

Silence falls thin.

The soft clink of Río’s collar rings out from somewhere nearby.

Ecstatic but barely apologetic nerves tighten with inevitability.

Cool, slightly coffee-scented breath picks up with an even faster tempo across skin, a steady but uncertain heart-rate pulsating beneath fingers. And a quick, thick but illegible swallow reconfigures neck muscles underneath the heel of his hands, none of this offering clear, explicit consent.

He turns his shut eyes downwards, contently sighing, feeling a million times lighter and happily drowning in a sea of relieved, flitting butterflies even with sunny, lake-scented air stained with a slight sense of hovering imminence. Eyelids begin to open, landing on a column of gently heaving white shirt buttons, ill-prepared to meet Will's.

Despite narcotized love confessions and the fact that he *has* been almost embarrassingly lovesick for so long, he knows he *should* explain himself, however reluctantly. And words *should* be adequate. But he doesn't want to, having finally and fully kissed Will Graham, who now knows the depths of his adoration, with all of his heart and soul, yearning to be a touch selfish just for a little while longer.

And yet even *this* requires words.

He blinks up without moving his head, meeting Will’s stunned gaze.

Will stares back, and his eyelids flex with surprise as he slows down his breathing through open lips.

And gentle blue-gray starts to harden, victim to another worrying wince, conveying something far different than when their lips helplessly collapsed against one another.

He falls into the endless depths of their deliciously semi-unfocused pupils continuing to search his with greater panic, wondering if a rhetorical ‘Was that very terrible’ would suffice. But the intent already sways in what little space remains between them alongside a tiny prayer if they could somehow magically manifest without moving lips, tiny bursts of lake air and petrichor-stained soil and Río's arid canine scent rolling in from a distance.

Will’s arm twitches, still around his waist.

But it seems he *has* been giving nothing but words in his own way, steeped in preservation-oriented actions for so long, beseeching for their translation to appear in the least antagonistic way possible.

Worried, bright gold flickers down to his own lips.

He resists calling out a tiny, strangled noise, victim to softly coursing, aroused awareness.

His lips warmly press against Will's with even less warning, pushing against their hem as if to say 'If you need me to deny myself and restore our friendship for you, Will, I will.' His lower lip brushes the faintest suggestion and they open with a cautious but willing sigh.

Supple, rough plush moves with his bottom lip.

And he feels *his* shoulders stiffen, exhaling a harsh, echoing breath.

The grip around his waist tightens, disrupting silk.

Their lips click between deep, breathy groans, every noise going straight to his temples.

Will sighs even louder, moving his warm, denim atmosphere ever nearer and rendering him delirious on top of an already aching erection. Heat floods into his cheeks from behind closed eyes, softly whimpering against Will's upper lip as he reaches for a high, sharp cheekbone.

Will breathes a noise too soft to be a moan between his.

A happily overwhelmed, cool tear slides down his cheek.

He repositions his fingers and cradles a gentle, unsteadily pounding temporal point, deepening their kiss with a slight tilt of his head. Nose tips brush one another and breath softly gasps across his face, helplessly drowning in their cool, faster rhythm and his own veins pumping hot and overpowering. He sighs, happily lightheaded, feeling his circulation start to uncontrollably flow southwards.

And Will strokes up his lower back, gripping onto the silk between shoulder blades.

Their lips click apart, sighing release.

He shivers, discovering his groan a loud, uneven whine behind the safety of closed eyes. They snap open, partially embarrassed.

Will stares back amazed, a slightly humored sheen creeping across his pink face.

He watches his paler thumb drag down the beginnings of a thicker, bearded jaw with soft eyes, hearing that pulse point heave with illegible worry.

He cannot *even* bring himself to murmur the handsome boy's name.

And with language comes more explanation, and he *still* does not feel like explaining himself as it slowly nears a consciously unintended type of petulance deep within bone marrow. He leans down, kissing Will's immaculately fibrous lips, wishing to replace a more well-meant 'Don't deny us, mylimasis. I always knew it could be like this.'

Will's lips unfold beneath his, kissing him back with just as much fervor.

He stammers a deep, almost agonizing groan, practically melting into his doorframe as he resituates his fingers and cups the back of an obscenely soft, sweaty neck. Dazed tears pinch the corners of his eyes, awestruck at what a surprisingly receptive Will Graham feels, and even tastes, like. And it is heaven, thrusting his lower lip between Will's.

And he cannot stop another unguarded, whimpering grunt down Will's throat, wrapping his grip around a warm waist, lingering on a loathsomely clothed lower back.

Will presses against him, moaning, silk inadvertently shifting and providing even more awareness to his blissful yet ever neglected erection. His nostrils fill with thick, potent arousal alive with skin-scented perspiration and salty saliva, the weight against him rife with clear signs that Will is just as hard as he is.

He is softly backed up against the frame casing before he can even groan approval, two pairs of soft, squeaking footsteps a loud hymn against the dead silence, clutching Will and aligning their hips even closer.

Will smoothly purrs, vibrating every inch of his lips.

He sighs, pushing the handsome boy against him and discovering Will's clothed erection dangerously close to his own. A sensation surges to grind against him, to lick Will's moist, glazed inner lining, but the boy's emotional motivations still hold him back despite wanting to drown in his deepest waters.

A warm, wet tongue teases his lower lip, clicking into his mouth.

He groans, shivering, gripping denim hips even tighter and feeling tears spilling from the corners of his eyes. His tongue intertwines with Will's, clacking deliriously wet between the uneven, slick, fading gasps of eggs and coffee coating the insides of Will's cheeks and upper palates.

And he surrenders.

He softly holds Will's face, licking deep into that mouth he has fantasized about for so long.

Breath falls even cooler against his face, its rhythm so eager and receptive, he may very well climax at any given second and yet happily indifferent to the Will's possible cynicism creeping into the silent kinesthetic conversation. Will breathily sighs, pushing him in so close their clothed erections brush against one another.

And if he were not so happy, he would cry.

Will tilts his head, caressing the velvety flat of his tongue even deeper and brushing a gently wettened lower lip underneath his. *He* leans back against the doorframe willingly, attacking Will's tongue with a quiet yet half-submissive growl, lifting his fingers to perfect, biting soft bristles.

And Will's wildly beating heart picks up even faster.

A touch tenderly grips his shoulder, a thumb dragging across his collarbone as their tongues continue to swirl relentless patterns. Testosterone and oxytocin raise his lightheaded perception even higher out of the top of his skull, breathlessly woozy and feeling as if he could fall over or helplessly come at any second, and he would be perfectly content with either outcome.

"Hmm...” and Will’s vibrating tongue clicks with an exit.

An unbridled gasp stutters, leaning forward to chase lips.

Half-apologetic, open kisses press softly against his.

He hears himself purr, slowly catching his breath and high on the slowly blurring line between Will and body chemistry, happily desperate.

“H-Hannibal...” murmurs between lighter pecks, gently squeezing his shoulder.

He attempts to ignore the heinous existence of words, resolutely pinching his eyes shut and softly cupping Will’s smooth upper lip and terminating any further speech. He knows there may not be outright rejection laced with them, but there will be a caveat of some kind, a heart-wracking, sacrificial stipulation on *his* part. And it is not *so* petulant to want to immerse himself in kissing a beautifully receptive Will Graham, hating believing the act may soon become a rarity.

Will pulls back, their lips wetly clacking apart.

He keeps his eyes closed, resisting the urge to whine at the loss of contact.

“Hannibal...” he speaks louder with a tiny snort, inadvertently sounding rather entertained.

Will’s scented heat blindly sways, cold, pulsing syllables evaporating into his philtrum.

He almost mewls, helpless to temptation and the smell of Will’s exquisite, earthy-scented arousal, unable to stop himself from twitching violently against silk. And his mouth waters with even more purpose, almost wishing he did not just envision Will’s erection just as the magic spell, like the last night of the sodium thiopental experiment, has broken.

He stands in the sun-drenched, open-balconied hallway once more, close to agonizing tears over possibly being rejected to some degree by his beloved even with every inch of his mouth and nasopharynx plagued by a willing yet unconfirming taste and smell. And this must be how he dies, drowning alone in arousing, spiritual sunlight than in the Atlantic in Will’s arms.

"Hannibal..." whispers softly with a slight, insistent tremor.

He savors the firmer plosives echoing in shared air, attempting to quietly collect himself.

"Hmm..." he smirks, turning the darkness behind his eyelids down to what remains between them, *knowing* the boy's column of white buttons stares back like an arrow pointing to his suffering or becoming.

He lets out a quiet, uneven sigh, trying to ignore Will's scent and failing. And his jaw continues aching and his mouth watering as if in poetic retaliation.

Eyelids slowly blink open, avoiding confirmation.

He guides his gaze even further down, discovering one of his black house slippers *has* slipped rather wantonly between Will's browner pair.

Heat rushes back to his cheeks, never needing anyone in his life more than *this* Will Graham, an open, *receptive* Will Graham who, as far as he hopes, must love him through how studious fingertips and tongue exude such a caring touch. He has never needed anyone like this, except perhaps, an ignorant, pre-christened Will who sat across from him in his Baltimore office for so many months, a template of what he could be molded into with or without a small push or environmental circumstance. It was always meant to progress into this, if Will could truly see it for himself.

He smiles, fully exposed.

A soft shudder surges.

And Will's grip tenderly tightens around his shoulder.

He locks his gaze onto bright oceanic blue, looking as vindicated as *he* feels.

Will twitches one end of his pinker lips up into something akin to a grin, smile lines rippling underneath his lightly peppered dark brown beard.

He reaches to cradle a sharp, angular cheekbone, discovering his heart irrevocably fluttering, and a soft, warm blush gradually appears across tanned, bearded cheeks. His heart painfully throbs at Will's receptivity, brushing amazement across its apple, stroking it once more with a much more diligent gaze. Its color deepens, and in the knowledge that *he* is the cause.

"Your wanting is not inconvenient, my boy..." he hears himself hum through a thick, husky voice, fondly gazing at the long, brown curls he begins to brush through, praying for fair translation.

Will huffs a tiny smile, blinking down.

He straightens, attempting to conceal that he is still as hard as Will.

And Will raises his eyebrows almost insinuatingly, contemplatively shifting his jaw to one side.

"And neither is yours," he wryly quips, returning a barely suggestive, bright grin.

He feels a slight urge to tighten his robe, as if that could lessen the sudden, possible inference to *his* hopeless, silk-covered erection. And he twitches even harder, hearing his heartbeat skip a painful beat, and Will's wafting warmth and the texture against him is too intoxicating, *wishing* he could drop his head back against the doorframe and groan for Will to stop

torturing him or even, perhaps, to stop the *effect* the boy impressed upon him years ago, to fuck him senselessly right here and now.

“W-Will...”

He swallows, discovering his throat dry.

And his gulp echoes loudly into deep stillness, softly plagued with two streams of uncoordinated breath and his fitfully anxious heartrate.

His hand lifts to the nape of Will’s neck, delicately stroking the finer hair across his hairline.

Sweetly concerned, cerulean eyes sparkle, a faint, pleased shadow across sun-kissed, bearded skin.

Repentance leans on his shoulders, certain but a bit doubtful as tears prickle the corners of his eyes, choosing to watch his wrist tendons flexing over Will’s hemmed, white-dressed shoulder still shining against the sun. He roots against its absolving glow once more, observing the cushioned microfiber pressing against the soles of his feet.

“T-take care with my heart, Will, it is fragile...” he slowly but confidently flickers back into an even brighter, smiling gaze, that old, familiar yearning he has associated with Will for years tugging at his intestines. But he falters, flickering down into the sliver of space between them with an even hotter surge piercing tear ducts, a gentle, faraway lightheadedness overtaking his temples. “And has been broken and rebuilt many times. I-it...”

He blinks at the ceiling, taking a deep, sharp sniff.

A loud sigh abandons all affliction.

"It cannot afford the violence you may..." He stares into soft, sweet pupils beset with worry, radiating caution; all of the uncertainty of his heart willingly shining against its better judgment. “Or may not enact upon it.”

Time stands still.

And a strange, yet solid calm slowly descends.

Will continues to compassionately stare, a single blink disrupting their bright, oceanic color.

His heart pounds, oblivious to his fate.

He glances down at the chiffon hugging his feet, unable to continue this relentless dance, noticing every fallen card speckled across oak paneling, his heart balancing on the tips of their different colored house shoes, bleeding terror-filled veracity and desperation into Will’s browner fabric.

“I-indulge me?” a smooth, nasal accent inches closer.

His nerves clench, his pulse thumping into his throat.

Eyelashes twitch, and his gaze unintentionally draws towards the first step of the stairs, finding himself surrounded, encircled by that remembered impression of what it feels like to truly experience Will's empathy in action. And that breeze of pheromones airily drifts into the depths of cellular structures, blanketing, securing even *his* half-rigid posture.

"H-haven't I?" he attempts to choke out.

Fate bursts from his vene cava, and he practically drowns in its vastness.

Silence gradually subsumes against the tide.

He almost chokes on his heartbeat, desperate not to surrender any more of himself.

"Will..." he murmurs weakly, uncertain if he summons caution or terror.

And he is further blanketed, almost forgetting what it feels like to be truly seen through sober, empathetic blue eyes. Pungent though soft, sweaty oxytocin rises, delicately rocking his temples towards divine eros, swelling him even harder against silk, unknowing if he is the current or Will its moon.

A far violent shiver surges.

He looks into Will's softly impudent eyes defeated, feeling a pit slowly forming in the back of his stomach, not even knowing *what* his nonverbal cues have unwittingly evoked.

Will blinks, realizations slowly obstructing shining oceans and glowing skin.

"Ah, hell, Hannibal. I..." the boy murmurs, stepping back into that sliver of space, weakly scrunching in thoughtful reverence or concern. A little of that blanket starts to tumble from his shoulder, leaving him even more exposed, tactile. "I never knew I could reduce you to this..."

Even Will could admit that was not entirely true.

"Shit..."

Wider, bright oceanic blue stares into his eyes as if he were searching for a version of Hannibal Lecter that was never emotionally handfasted to Will the moment he stepped into Jack Crawford's office.

"Fuck..." Will sighs breathlessly, tenderly touching his face.

He closes his eyes, feeling another hot wave of tears pricking like needles.

Will's gently rough fingers, calluses formed by fishing and gripping dumbbells stroke the heights of his cheekbones, never knowing how much he needed being cherished *and* by him. And he becomes increasingly indecisive between unleashing those tears or helplessly yet unashamedly climaxing in silk briefs, and he would be more than pleased with either outcome.

“T-trust me, Hannibal...” softly murmurs as warm finger pads lay to rest, cradling his cheek.

He pinches his eyes shut, almost hating that specific tremor in that gentle, compassionate voice and despising identifying the sensation as hatred. And behind closed eyelids, that already wide, dense lead balloon in the back of his stomach swells.

Will sighs, his hot breath streaming sharply downwards.

"Trust *me,* as we are *now* ..." he exhales emphatically, that quiver unrelenting, wafting down across his chin and stroking the blistering hot apple of his cheek.

He quickly registers every sensation, opening his eyes to associate the speed of gently fluttering eyelashes with each brushing thumb print into a mind palace file.

“I …" Will blinks down at their slippers, thickly swallowing with a quick, meditative turn of his head. And the vastness of his gaze returns more rooted, perhaps even lovingly. “I know I have no room to talk though. B-but y-you and I both know you *have* placed your trust in the *idea* of us so long ago when even I didn’t want to fully see it, but you do not have to be alone in that anymore."

He wants to chuckle, knowing he could say the same for Will.

The words pulse in his throat, and yet, he would like nothing better than Will’s *sexual* surrender. Despite this, he is not blind to the boy's preferred mental and emotional correspondence, which borders on the erotic, not to mention what has been made simultaneously absolute and yet not so explicitly known.

“An-and as for your heart..." Will lifts his voice as if changing the topic, blinking up to the ceiling. He sighs loudly, raising his eyebrows rather thoughtfully as his tanned Adam’s apple bobs, almost silently beckoning for him to lean into its heat from this tempting angle. “W-*well* ...”

An eyebrow sweetly lifts even higher as oceanic blue returns, silently shrugging.

“I-it seems I have had it for quite a while now...” he calmly smiles, glowing a beautiful golden light that rivals the sun's glare against wild, brighter brown curls. His head tips to one side, one softly quirking shoulder nearly disappearing beneath wilder, curlier ends, “And never quite knew what to do with it until these last few weeks.”

His chin trembles, his eyes flooding with tears.

And he smiles, realizing his entire body weightless and glowing, gravitating towards Will’s mouth even with tears dripping down his warm cheeks.

Will lets out a sharp, breath loudly upon impact, the cool stream shivering across skin.

A softly arched grin blossoms against *his* gentler chuckle, succumbing to the hand on his lower back pushing him in even closer as their chests meet. And Will tenderly brushes longer fringe over his ear, an unexpected, happily vulnerable whine blossoming through his lips.

Will releases his kiss, their lips clacking apart.

He happily sighs against Will's, hating opening his eyes.

"I love you desperately," Will whispers breathlessly, almost drowsily blinking down at his mouth then shining the warmest, glowing gaze into his.

He melts back against the doorframe with a gentle, happy groan, awashed with tears and a skip in his pulse. His smile unfurls fully unguarded, smile lines reaching already dimpled crow's feet.

And the dictionary of William Graham unfolds, smoothing across blushing, tanned parchment and earnest golden rings circling enlarged pupils, the sincere quirk of smile lines and pinker, wet, thin lips a brand-new monolingual stave. It is somewhat close to a sheen he has not been able to see clearly since before the victory and the fall, since reciting John 15:13 to a past version of Will whose roots remain as receptacles for pink cheeks.

And *this* is what has been knowingly missing.

"I..." Will pauses, closing his eyes.

And they turn with a quick, silent exhale, appending.

His lips click open and the tip of his tongue clicks down into his mouth, both partially moistened by his own. The profile of eyelashes flutter open, returning tear-filled Monet canvases.

"H-Hannibal, I have been falling *in* love with you since we settled in here, and I … I …" Will heaves nearly laboriously, gazing down at his lips then retreating back into the smile lodged in his eyes. He pauses, taking a soft, weighty intake and silently collects himself before continuing to slowly lean in, flickering blazing blue eyes down to stare even more desperately at his mouth. "I think..."

Temples happily swim, helplessly enamored.

"I-it's... killing m-m..."

And Will crashes his lips into his, not giving him time to react to the eight most beautiful words in the English language. He happily growls, flinging his arms around Will's neck, caressing the curls on the back of his head and cradling his hairline while clinging to his lips, and drowning, *submerging* into Will's deepest waters. And even *this* is a better death than the fall.

His hands drop to untuck Will's shirt, gliding around jean-clad hips.

The boy lurches forward, gasping jaggedly into their kiss.

Leather quietly hisses, a metal belt buckle clanging open.

He breathes into Will's open, warm mouth, unzipping a gateway he has only dreamed of and feeling his fingers travel upwards to undo the first of far too many shirt buttons. Will softly whimpers across *his* rounded lips, adding to the echo of zipper grooves and a hotter surge straining against silk, softly wafting into eardrums like seashells.

A tiny bite nips his upper lip, hot hands tightly gripping his waist.

His fingers release the last button over his sternum, gently thudding against a wild heartbeat.

"Mmm..."

He brushes his tongue against Will's, smoothing down his firm chest and sensitive nipples, punishing any and all attempts at speech.

Will stammers, the vibration a delicious, rhythmic echo across his spit-drenched, hypersensitive tongue immersed in two streams of heavy breath, the fine line between himself and the boy ecstatically blurring. And *he* gently attacks velour with a higher, uneven growl, feeling his soul spiral out of the crown of his head, silken anguish intensifying almost painfully.

"I-isn't..." gasps between his lips.

Will pulls back, huffing, catching his breath with a wide, dopey smile.

He smirks, noting the brighter, taunting shade of blue around beautifully dilated pupils.

He grins a little wider, glancing down with a happily content though shaky inhale, and setting his trembling fingers back to work unbuttoning Will's shirt.

But buttons intrude towards *his* body heat, and temples and sinuses are immediately struck with a heady, simmering cocktail of arousal and adrenaline. It pervades the steady streams of intermingling, shared air, soft noises and groans fusing together as a separate entity all of its own. He gasps across the shallower bristles generously freckling Will's philtrum, leaving his lips softly rounded around a soft hitch interrupting the attempts to collect himself.

"Isn't th-this an in-inconvenient time?" Will tenderly teases, deliberately puffing over his softly parted, barely deterred mouth as he persists with the absurd number of shirt buttons a bit more quickly.

Denim, musk-scented hips jerk forward, lightly brushing against silk.

He sharply exhales, gazing back into dilated pupils with a tiny curl against the ends of a small smile, slowly unveiling his ribbed, white undershirt.

"D-don't *you* have a vindication to attend to?" the boy continues to mockingly breathe, creeping a devious grin even closer, playfully brushing against his.

He snorts, laughing softly against a light chuckle.

Will closes his eyes with an inviting sigh, parting his lips.

He grins, feeling his eyes glistening as he gently floats, intoxicated on the fine line between his and Will's husky, erratic rhythms and earthy aroma. And a shower of cold goosebumps down the back of gently sweating ribs offers a blessed reprieve, alleviating a little more pressure off of silk briefs.

“I have many, my darling...”

He pauses, kissing the corner of Will’s mouth softly rustling into warm smile lines, lifting to linger his lips over a gently sweating temple. He takes a slow, deep breath, savoring the layers of soap and aftershave underneath a glaze of salty, sun-stained notes, absolute, muggy arousal rising against another intake. And he glides down a beautifully bearded mandible, harsh whiskers sweetly biting back, hovering dangerously close to an earlobe.

Will softly groans into his already goosebump-ridden bare neck.

A hot, approving sigh murmurs across cartilage.

His fingers slide beneath an infuriating white shirt’s open panels, surrounding and reveling deliriously in Will’s warm, gently shaking waist. He blinks down and purrs into an unfortunately clothed shoulder instead, wishing they were naked and his bare inner thighs were gripping its receptive heat.

“But I believe it has been barely 24-hours since I was rudely interrupted on my way home to you. B-besides...” he growls breathily into Will’s ear, pausing to drag his teeth down its lobe.

“Shit...” draws out with a chest-deep, jagged moan.

He chuckles with a tiny grin, feeling a softer grip cradling *his* lower back.

He manages to lean back trembling, hating to be separated from that warm neck but glad to have the support of the doorframe between his shoulder blades. A slow, smiling deep breath wafts, and the microfiber around the soles of his feet grounds him, *intending* to enjoy every second of this before full chemical surrender.

Will flickers his eyes shut and sighs his pinker lips open, drawing closer as if chasing his heat.

But the boy stops, furrowing his eyebrows.

And he hangs his head with a loud, almost aggravated groan, attempting to recover.

He smiles even wider, feeling his fingers tenderly brush through rough brown curls retaliating, springing back into place. They repeat the gesture, and a slight, waning current of sun-kissed blond and gray shines even brighter against the agitated flow, his heart bursting with each glistening tide.

Will softly purrs from somewhere beneath all that hair, an ecstatic scent of provoked, softly unwashed scalp heaving approvingly.

He drowsily blinks back up, shining a happily confused, dark blue smile.

He lights up, tapping an Adam's apple for emphasis.

"Automatic feeding tube..."

He deeply chuckles, gripping belt loops and pulling the boy even closer, barely caring how hard *he* strains and the magnificence of over-stimulating silk. It is practically foreplay as he nuzzles his nose into Will's smooth, warm neck, relishing the softer, gentler northwards charge.

"He'll be fine for another two hours," grumbles into sun-scented skin, softly tracing his jugular.

A huff wafts across his helix, warm, breathing lips and rough whiskers lingering deliciously close to the beginnings of *his* jaw. And a light, almost chaste kiss warms his cheek and almost apologetically alleviates the gentle burn of stubble. He melts with a soft, roaring sigh, dropping his head back onto the doorframe behind closed eyes, happily dazed though loathed to lose that heat.

Will silently shakes his head, looking directly into his pupils and pinching an increasingly playful smile dancing across his pinker cheeks.

And a small part of him nearly stands to attention, enamored and amazed at such impartiality.

William Graham of Wolf Trap could never *conceive* of such a reaction, even if influenced. However, he tries not to wonder where the Will he has fallen in love with is. *This* was the Will he has always been destined for. His breath softly catches and eyelids quirk a touch wider, intoxicated on the waltzing compromise in what space exists between their lips, and his piercing bloodstream travels even more intentionally southwards.

Will continues to shake his head rather unsurprised, acidic, dilated pupils softly glistening as he presses his lips together. They slowly separate, clicking apart with a nonplussed smile, gradually provoking half-mischievous, stubble-covered smile lines.

"You sick bastard..." he gently snorts, sending wider laughing lines up to sun-kissed crow's feet, deeper, narrower blue eyes sparkling.

He openly laughs, kissing the boy's chuckle.

Will moans between his lips and dips his hands even lower, gripping his ass.

He whimpers, drinking in Will's hot, wet exhale.

And Will's waning intakes are met with an ebbing, shallower, cold air streaming from nostrils and hollowing, intermingling.

He loses himself for what feels like minutes, memorizing the subdued flavors of the wet inner world of Will's mouth, his temples gently rocking against the thicker texture beneath his

tongue and its hotter taste, the gentle, cooler gloss over the top of perfect velour.

And velvet encroaches with increasing purpose, surrender drawing ever closer.

His arms tightly wrap around ribbed cotton, groaning an unruly, jagged noise that barely sounds like himself as oxytocin and testosterone lift him out of the crown of his head, soaring his temples to loftier heights. A sharper breath into Will's open-mouthed groan somehow grounds him and stabilizes his erection, focusing on softly sweating hands beginning to gently cradle his jaw, determined to fall apart once naked in Will's arms if he would be allowed the pleasure.

Soft, rough thumbs lovingly caress his cheekbones.

Tears gently foam behind closed eyelids, never knowing how much he needed *this* kind of touch or even, perhaps Will, of all people, *enacting* this kind of touch.

"Fuck..." Will shakily groans as he moves his amazed thumbs up their curves, pushing loose fringe behind his ears, the intimate nature of the movement provoking tears and moving something even deeper within his chest. "Your cheekbones..."

He slowly opens his eyes, chuckling, a ferocious velocity bubbling in the depths of his testicles.

Will smiles a beautifully reverent black gaze into his, quirking the ends of his lips a bit higher.

"I … I n-never..." he slowly blinks down to his lips, gently furrowing his eyebrows and the creases between them as he leans back in, practically smoldering with arousal as he draws another deep, almost beleaguered inhale, "kn-knew I coul—"

An even hotter, wet tongue forces *his* smile open.

He grunts cheerfully, muffled against Will's lips.

A gentle chuckle reverberates, blindly drifting his hands down to a still loathsomely clothed waist, wishing they both were naked without having to deal with the intricacies of such tedious removal.

Blameless worry sparks.

And despite Will's joyous tongue practically down his throat and his lack of experience, there is still always a chance the boy will deny himself what has been missing for the past year, possibly believing that sex with another man beyond his capacity. A single no *will* create a far more unconscious and unbearable impasse, and he is nowhere near prepared but willing to give Will what he needs.

Self-transcendence continues to be exhausting.

Cushioned, soft flesh moves with his lower lip.

And it lifts, slotting into the seam of his mouth with a gentle groan.

He delicately sighs, shivering, happily overwhelmed yet woefully realistic.

Hot, firm hands rest on *his* waist, laying their groins flush against one another with delicious force.

His eyes flicker shut around traitorous, needling tears, quietly gasping at the restrained shape of Will's denim-clad erection. And his mouth begins to water, already tasting salty, sensitive iron from its rising scent, treacherous arousal insistently pushing even harder against silk. But he still needs to know, despite this being a positive indicator and the wildly surging amazement of Will's denim-clad erection against his.

His tongue clicks out of that magnificent mouth, and the twitch in his briefs almost coordinates with another shiver.

"Sp-speak now, Will, o-or..." he whispers across the hot, open seam of softly breathing lips, unable to continue this pleasant yet odd sort of foreplay and almost hating that he leans forward just a fraction to tease the poor, mostly inexperienced boy. A delirious, hot sigh drifts onto his, eyelashes falling against the tops of sun-kissed cheeks. He presses innocent, half-apologetic kisses against a downcast lower lip, already pulling Will's undershirt out of his jeans and hating his instincts, "F-forever hold your peace."

Will chases his heat, fuller, pinker lips falling open with a louder whine.

Dreamy, sweet intoxication pulls him even closer to chemical surrender.

"A... a word, my darling..." he smiles, languidly dropping his lips against the beginnings of a square, whiskered jaw, contentedly lightheaded, gently nipping at greasy beard sweat. Will groans into his neck, the cool air interrupting his efforts to remember every nuanced note and flavor and associated noise. "I... I'm not trying to manipulate you, b-but a word, perhaps even a short sentence."

And Will's smile lines slowly ripple into both of their cheeks.

"Call me darling when I take you, Hannibal."

And Count Dr. Hannibal Lecter VII M.D.'s knees buckle, which has rarely occurred in his 48 years of life, Will grabbing him by the curves of his ass and softly hoisting him back against the doorframe.

He purrs, wrapping an arm around Will's neck, mouthing and biting that slender, bearded jawline and gently sucking on an obscenely smooth earlobe as if partially possessed.

Will groans louder, dragging his thumbs down silk.

He pauses, sighing weakly into Will's bristled cheek, conceding to the bite and burn, attempting to recover. His heart rate drops almost disappointedly from the six most beautiful words out of the boy's perfect mouth. He immediately whips that infernal white shirt right

off, partially uncertain, believing his finger pads practically on fire as they stroke down the indentations of slowly hardening arm muscles and warm, soft skin.

Will hotly sighs, mewling.

“H-huh...” flexes with a slight chuckle.

He blinks up into dilated pupils, confused.

The boy pulls back with a beautiful, bright smile, placing all of their beard-covered lines and dimples on full display so lovingly he cannot decide whether to fall even deeper in love or orgasm furiously inside already faintly wet silk briefs.

“D-did I just make the Chesapeake Ripper’s knees buckle?" he growls teasingly, turning his head to one side as proud, dark blue eyes sparkle while their brows furrow, slowly grinning like the cat having completely digested the canary.

And soft, warm hands grip *his* ass.

A high-pitched cry erupts, lurching forward.

"W-Will..." he chuckles weakly and believing his lighter register barely recognizable, unable to stay on the fence between foreplay and that certain cloud rife with acquiescence. Chemical surrender begins to surge with a Herculean velocity he has never truly known, being willingly pulled into its tide.

He lifts his fingers, dragging his thumb across a beautifully chiseled cheekbone.

Blue eyes flutter shut, slowly pointing downwards as pinker lips begin to softly round.

"I love you, mon amour..." he whispers with a tiny smile, stroking soft, leathered skin with the realization that his habitual language of love still flows more freely near a bedroom.

Goosebumps ripple like the tide across Will's beautiful, warm neck.

A shiver flickers, brushing the side of his nose against Will’s.

Lips click open, a soft, cool breath pulsing against the faint ripple of his smile lines.

He presses a gentle, warm kiss against them, sensing a light tug against his robe and glancing down without moving his head, finding Will’s tanned hand has doubly wrapped his dark blue silk sash beneath beaming filtered sunlight.

And he is pushed off the doorframe.

Will's lips crash into his as he is gingerly shoved into his bedroom.

Eyelids happily close, feeling as if his feet are floating.

He cradles that perfectly stubbled jawline, letting himself be maneuvered, licking even deeper into heated moisture and happily grunting as another warm tongue softly battles his own. His head spins, and his temples rock even faster as something warm and blissful spirals out of nowhere, attempting to collect himself as much as possible, even with Will's tongue in his mouth.

The hold on his robe tie loosens, leaving silk untethered down his bare chest.

Lips click apart, and an unbridled groan releases at the loss of Will's mouth.

Ribbed cotton ripples, sighing off naked skin.

Breath runs even more erratic, intoxicated with the layers and overlapping scents and combinations of soft soap, sweat, earthy skin, the certainty within the roots of hair follicles. And his head spins faster, moaning even louder into a deliciously hot, wet kiss, ready to fully and completely drown within the boy's every fathom in the middle of his bedroom.

"Ma chérie..." he purrs, blindly running his hands down softly biting bristles, past warm skin surrounding a seductively pulsing Adam's apple and the rigid curve of an inhaling collarbone, opening his eyes onto even more dilated pupils. "My darling..."

Will closes his eyes, shuddering.

He blinks down, taking in the boy's softly golden, heaving breast and realizing he reaches out to touch the thin, wiry hair and warm skin covering his heart. He flinches against its warmth and partial disbelief, hearing only his soft, distant breath surrounding Will's short, stuttering gasps.

The heel of his hand drops, slightly brushing the top of a brownish-peach areola, encompassing the epicenter that enlivens William Graham's very life force. He is moved, observing his fingers pale against smooth, sun-stained skin, sensing that heat flutter and churn slowly calm beneath his palm as Will's heartbeat begins to pump a gentler rhythm, hot cortisol leaping off fresh, tangy skin.

He lifts his gaze, trying to catch his breath.

And met, beautifully wrecked eyes are a gorgeously dilated dark blue.

Will winces, taking a slow inhale through beard-encompassed rounded lips as if he is about to speak.

The tiny noise echoes, beyond the steadily slowing harmonies of breath and blood, happily unknowing and uncaring where Will's or his begin and end.

The boy smiles contently instead, a tear sliding across faintly ruffled, beard-covered smile lines.

He leans in, kissing those perfect lips, sucking in a loud, hissing intake of air.

And his hands begin to slide blindly past thicker, downy hair encircling criminally soft areolas, expanding, warm ribs punching outwards with a soft, open-mouthed gasp. Will laughs, ticklish, and *he* can't help but chuckle into that perfect mouth.

Their lips move apart with a higher-pitched squeak.

He looks down without moving his head, irrevocably humbled.

And another smile, though professionally stitched and faded by time, exists between them, but in a different capacity, designed by a more evocative kind of fate. He draws even closer towards its heat, oddly complimented, observing nothing else but this neatly stitched pentimento across his original canvas, his mouth immediately watering.

“Oh, God, Hannibal...” Will softly purrs against his top lip, shivering behind closed eyes.

His eyes flicker sweetly to the thin material covering blue, sincerity shining across his face.

He divests Will of his jeans, unable to take his eyes off the arching, aged scar tissue that seems to stare back through thicker, blackish-brown and lightly gray sagittal stomach hair, sure the half-attempt at disembowelment remembers its artist. And he releases an already liberated, clanging belt buckle, denim shuffling down onto pale thighs and pooling around house shoes. Will exhales in relief, stepping out of both in one fluid motion, brushing even closer against silk.

Lips begin to ignite, discovering or realizing what is to be his penance.

A warm, tender touch cradles the back of his neck.

And he sighs, ebbing acceptance.

His hands rest on Will's hips with a gentle grip, their impact sending trembling heat down his stomach.

But the past justified mistake continues to taunt him as if a siren call, luring him toward the oak floor's confessional bench to admit transgression. He almost misses a slight twitch beneath solid green boxers, and his throat runs dry.

He falls to his knees, fixated on the thicker hair trailing beneath Will’s belly button, intoxicated by interweaving recipes of wafting, taunting soap, salt, and musk. He shudders, wrapping his arms around gently bucking, though woefully clothed hips. And he buries his lips into its forestry, lost in each microscopic scent and drifting past bereavements floating across his tongue, smelling sweaty, earthen testosterone and light but anxiously leaping, sebaceous cortisol.

He shudders, letting out a loud, cool exhale and reciprocating all of the silent reverence in his heart, gently kissing the justified, if partially petulant, recovered incision at its apex.

A soft, sharp hiss wafts above him, lower abdominals flexing harshly inward.

He tightly grasps Will’s hips, pressing a series of kisses along its right-wise arch.

“Shi-it...” Will softly gasps, violently shivering.

And trembling fingers weave into his hair.

An unbridled purr fills his throat, continuing to adulate soft, stitched skin, noisily licking while palming and clutching cotton-clothed hips. He flicks the nearly invisible, sweaty hem with the tip of his tongue, spit lightly clicking with the movement.

Will groans like a man possessed, tightening his grip.

He grunts into the boy’s bare stomach, inebriated on ever nearing surrender.

Another pair of warm fingers slowly slide down the sweat-glazed curve of his neck, effortlessly conjuring goosebumps as they drop even further between shoulder blades, tracing Chiyoh’s careful incisions to his rhomboid muscles now as if wingpits provided by the fall.

He moans, brushing kisses back to the midpoint.

And he cannot feel any more like a Luciferic creature, though clothed and on his knees, breathing purgatorial wind into blessing Will’s carving or the past lives they have shared. A long, smooth breath sucks in overhead, gently shaking hands slowly moving down the mirroring scars on either end of his spine in such a loving and thoughtful way that they almost feel absolving, but not quite forgiving.

Awareness surges downwards with even more purpose, his temples rocking with dizzying ethereality.

He hums into Will’s sweat, forming tiny, burning tears and burying his lips into the gentle tickle of stomach hair caressing his nose, lifting to manically brush remission down a shivering bare waist harmonious to soft, purring gasps.

Thumbs lightly knead into clothed hips with a firmer grip.

“Oh, Hannibal...” trembles in a sweet whisper, full of silent understanding.

He cannot help but cringe, unable to look up into the deep, empathetic gaze that tends to assist with *this* tonality, the addictively, vulnerable plea that somehow manages to extract even more fragments from his mosaic of self with a little *too* much ease. And with slight movement, Will’s wet, cotton-swaddled erection exhales closer against his Adam’s apple.

His breath chuckles against the boy's lower abdomen, more than willing to oblige.

He kisses and slowly licks up the left arc, hearing a gentle hum and his tongue wetly click from a distance, continuing to massage warm hips.

Will moans even louder, *his* erection swelling and gently beading.

A happily submerged, shaky sigh wafts across salty, spit-stained skin.

He pulls back, gasping, nearly drunk on the border between selfishness and clemency, feeling Will's ensnared wetness breathing a ghostly caress across his Adam's apple. And he exhales feverishly, smirking to himself as he extracts green cotton.

Will's stomach trembles inwards, exhaling another hot, skyward gasp.

Perfectly curved, pale four and a half inches bounce against tanned, lower abs, glistening and smelling of an exquisite eagerness that makes his mouth water and his heart race. And the room woozily turns, lake air twisting against the tangier fragrance combining with Will's sticky, salty skin and willing, cortisol-stained gasps along with the faint reminder of a happily sated Chilean Terrier having rolled around in his bedsheets an hour ago.

He groans, happily lightheaded, with an overpowering moistness in his silk briefs.

He softly bites up Will's left hip where the path dissipates, rapt in hot flesh and arousal, discovering overwhelmed, thicker tears in his eyes and amazement in his lowering fingers. And the heel of his hand begins to stroke up ruddy, shivering skin already tightening with recognition.

Will huffs into breathless octaves to vaulted ceilings, gently rocking in place.

Overblown wide, deep blue eyes flicker amazed, a breathy gasp opening round, dry lips even wider.

He closes his mouth, unable to hold back a glowing grin, discovering his fingers form a faraway fist. And he is smoothly gliding upwards, locked on a dilated stare blinking down into his, struggling to remain open.

"F-fu—" Will squeezes his eyes shut and throws his head back, groaning.

A tiny, sincere smirk forms through his tears and a deep, solid inhale.

His thumb playfully traces across a magnificent, hot wet crevice as if an afterthought, silently memorizing its surrounding delicate satin and stiffening, thick tree rings twitching against his palm. And invisible pressure builds against his tongue, aching to get his lips around Will's impressive length.

"Oh... oh, Jesus..."

Will whimpers as he drops his head forward, choking out a loud grunt. Wild, bright brown curls frame his pinker, bearded cheeks and cling to his sweaty forehead as he catches his breath, opening a deliciously unfocused, trusting gaze down into his. And if it were possible, *he* falls even deeper in love.

His fist returns to a gently charging root, solely fixed on those eyes.

An even louder yelp calls to the heavens.

He smiles unguardedly, slowly standing on shakier legs and bringing his hold with him.

Will stammers, blinking down to take in his lips with a sweet sigh.

And he barely registers leaning in to hover near Will's temptation, feeling arms warmly draw him in.

A hot moan wafts against *his* lips, with the insistent tip of a tongue licking up his bottom lip and into his mouth, causing an even more emanating, addictive heat between lingering erections. He weaves his fingers through wilder, unkempt curls, hearing a dizzied, drawn-out grunt deflating his lungs, believing this is everything he has ever dreamed of and more.

He turns, woozily leading them back towards his mattress, pinching his eyes shut and unwittingly brushing his ensnarement against the beautifully overstimulated mess that is Will Graham. And kisses click apart long enough to utter a soft noise across Will's deliciously warm murmur, both hands tightly clutching messy, rough hair.

Will's higher-pitched hum vibrates lips, sliding smoothly into his throat.

And it slowly erupts into a bright, muffled chuckle, their lips separating with a loud, lewd noise.

"I … I always thought your killing me would be a far more literal death..." Will quietly laughs as he leans in, and it is difficult not to gravitate forward to sweetly blanket that gorgeous mouth. He grins to himself and grasps the boy's naked hips, his veins overtaken by ecstatic satin as he guides him further backward.

The back of Will's knees bumps the mattress, light, tinkling noises a reminder of a breakfast tray.

"Will..." he sweetly chuckles, kissing a shivering grin.

And silk glides down *his* hips and thighs, sensitive, naked skin even more aware of itself from behind eyelids' golden shadows. A contented sigh quivers against the shape of Will's upturned lips, lagos-scented, grassy air a soft, mindful rush across slim, sweaty flesh, leaving goosebumps in its wake.

Warm fingers rest against his lower back, dangling dangerously close.

His mouth hovers close to hot, moist lips breathing soft, needy gasps, happily adrift in pure dizziness and slowly surrendering to every trembling body chemical as they lift into shorter, desperate vibratos. He already moans, delicately dropping his forehead against Will's, nipping a bottom lip and blindly cradling a bearded cheek as he kicks off his briefs.

"M-my love..."

A hot, inner crook of an elbow encompasses his waist, pressing them even closer together.

Electricity sparks achingly, standing on the brink of hapless acquiescence.

He manages to open his eyes, wetting his parched, moan-dry throat and stepping half a foot backward to put some separation between them, Will's warm palmistry on one hip an anchor.

But lips still linger, eyelashes practically flickering down Will's cheeks as two long, cool streams of breath sweetly blow against *his* face, a bared heart rate clamoring across his bare chest. And another pair of lips slowly opens with a gentle click.

“Oh god...” tenderly groans with a stronger edge.

Will blinks down without moving his head, dropping his already slackened jaw.

He follows, smirking, taking advantage of his angle and affectionately brushing down Will’s nose.

And his breath hitches, nearly succumbing to the sight of magnetism stroking stiff, pale olive skin against *his* helplessly erect, leaking fairness. He takes a deep, hissing breath, concentrating on rough whiskers and a slight soft uptick of cheeks and smile lines beneath finger pads, feeling an irrevocable flutter in his chest.

“Th-”

Will pauses, thickly swallowing as gently crossed pupils lock onto his.

He smiles, a gentle huff falling off its sweet sincerity and ever-so-slightly awkward nature and conjuring a soft shimmer in dark blue, almost black, eyes against *his* eclipsing shadow. And even *he* cannot help but wholeheartedly grin back, happily victim and complimented by Will’s lips twitching with a partially nervous heat, helplessly enamored and *knowing* it to be truly reciprocated.

But eyelashes flex towards a half-intoxicated, concerned gaze, a faint, dark shadow flickering in the sliver of space between dissipating grins.

Instincts tighten, preparing for the inevitable dropping of the other shoe.

“This is weird...” grins slightly innocently at their mutual orbit.

He chuckles, almost relieved, laying his forehead back on equally firm material.

“ *I* rather like it," he whispers tauntingly, almost touching Will’s lips while stroking soft, widening lower plush as if offering consolation for this gentle, though justifiable, worry. The back of his stomach still flips in silence, reminded he is all too ready to put on the breaks at any moment even against his behest.

Will blinks back up, beaming even with laughably traversing pupils.

“Well, I know *you* do!” he laughs, gently snorting.

He kisses those sweetly laughing lips like Will has confessed the depths of his love once more. But the timely or ill-timed reality that there is still a breakfast tray to attend to *and* an adventurous and often hungry Chilean Terrier bound to appear at any moment attempts to soften his fully bared erection, sobering the dizzying, silken sway around temples. And this *may* appear as part of his coddling nature, or rather the excessive lengths to accommodate Will Graham in his bedroom.

He groans rather irritably into Will's mouth, slowly pulling away.

The boy chases his lips with a higher-pitched whimper, and he gladly swells all over again.

"Gi-give me a minute, my dear Will..."

Feet walk rather smoothly around to the other side of his king-sized bed, and he gently blinks to adjust to the bright, late morning sunlight filtering through lightly swinging bamboo window blinds.

But each footstep is a reminder of his ruthlessly leaking weight bobbing up stomach hair, nakedness even more receptive to the cool lake air. A primal shiver rips down his spine, nerves softly bolting, bordering dangerously on another excruciating, touchless orgasm waiting in the wings. His breakfast is left on the bedroom bench in mild disbelief, and yet, it seems barely surprising given confessions from what feels like hours ago.

He returns, a tiny, excited shiver fluttering across his back.

But Will remains standing as laboriously gulps, shakily sighing to vaulted ceilings as a deeper, somewhat nauseated blush streaks across his tanned, bearded cheeks.

An ice-cold chill surges.

And a foot moves backward, giving him space.

Will's sun-kissed, bare chest softly rocks with calculated, though shallow breaths, nervously flickering an almost hyperventilating, mildly dilated gaze down *his* goose-flesh-covered body. An uneven sigh parts lips and sends his justified anxiety back to the ceiling, wild blinks racing behind *his* bare shoulders as if towards his en suite bathroom and double closet doors, seeming to look nowhere and yet everywhere *but* back into the gradual concern in *his* eyes.

He apprehends long, wet fringe behind one ear with a small, worried smile, noting the darker blush pouring down Will's tanned neck, the air between them sour with that inevitable shoe drop.

Bitter, panicking hydrocortisone leaps into even higher droves, their chord progressions uncertain butterfly wings. And he feels every oscillating note as if they were his own, hating their justified, relatively virginal existence, his blood starting to boil on a low, compassionate heat.

Lips press together to compensate for a lighthearted chuckle, slowly rounding to venerate Will's name as he reaches out to cautiously stroke rigid, muscular shoulders.

Thumbs gently glide along sensitive collarbone skin, watching that beautifully sun-stained neck gradually lose its embarrassed blossom. And he resists burying his face into its warmth, cupping shoulders as they slump forward with a defeated groan.

Certain, calm hands smooth back to the nape of his neck, drawing Will into an embrace.

Silence falls, happy to take his time if at all.

“God, Hannibal...” murmurs against his softly rustled smile lines.

Purposeful though timid palms slide down *his* waist, gripping bare hips.

Blue eyes flicker cautiously yet willingly into his, realizing his fingers glide across firm shoulders to test flimsier, overstimulated needs and Will needing a less manipulative-appearing push. And the boy happily groans, sinking onto his mattress.

He grins, his heart skipping a mild beat.

And he willingly falls to his knees, a hot bolt of electricity at the soft knock of kneecaps and firm ankles pressing the fleshier areas of his glutes.

“H-Hannibal...”

“Mm,” he chuckles, lightly squeezing bracketing, muscular thighs, intoxicated with the enamored, erection-drunk willingness radiating into his ribs. He ducks, leaning backward and kissing thin, pale flesh inside the kneecap, ecstatically drowning in a stronger, fragrant yearning intertwined with justified worry and multiple agonizing waves of orgasm denial.

“Hannibal, i-if R-Río...”

“Shh, mylimasis...” he whispers insistently, lifting off his ankles to give protesting lips soft, open-mouthed kisses. Low, receptive murmurs gradually lose an already lost battle, content breath flexing across *his* slowly rising grin and warm, resolute fingers brushing back into his hair. “I … I cannot waste more time *not* touching you.”

His head shakes incredulously, tinier tears burning at the corners of closed eyes.

Compassion leaps off the specificity of Will’s warm shell, a soft thumb pad sliding down *his* jugular.

He sighs happily, lifting his chin into the air and radiating up into a tearful blue-green.

“B- *besides* ...”

He manages to chuckle mid-gasp, seductively sitting back and inhaling the hot, reactive scent of Will's flushed, testosterone-heavy skin. A urethral vein violently shivers, its charge almost matching the flutter down *his* goosebump-freckled back or mutis mutandis, his mouth unashamedly watering and needing all four and a half inches down his throat.

Will muffles a high-pitched cry.

“ *I* eat everything on *my* plate...” he smirks with a low purr, blinking up to Will affectionately rolling his eyes with a tiny, slightly recovering huff. He slowly licks up that softly accelerating vein, fixated on laughing, twitching black pupils inching towards surrender, struggling to remain on his. And bubbling, internal desire grows quiet, watching Will drop his head back with a short, punched-out sob. “You already have her so well-trained...”

“Y- *you’re* not much help th-though...” Will grins at his vaulted ceilings, chuckling breathlessly.

He smiles in retaliation, removing just enough glistening expectancy.

“F-fuck, Hannib—”

“Shh, my darling,” he growls, lightly pressing Will’s hip bone and steadying a gloriously insistent thrust, purposefully puffing his syllables down that shameless vessel. A thumb nail tenderly trails downward and steadies Will's erratically quivering foundations, circulation and the boy's heart rate roaring, signaling approval, “Let me take care of you.”

And he takes the boy into his mouth, resisting the instinct to hollow out his cheeks.

Will whimpers, cupping the side of his head.

He also fights back a satisfied hum, blinking up to meet those striking, dark eyes.

But Will pinches them shut, tilting his head back with a louder, drawn-out grunt, his brown curls tumbling behind tanned shoulders.

Tears rain down faintly quirked, beaming smile lines, adoring that Will wants this as much as *he* does, that *he* can finally feel desired and desir *able* by the man who unknowingly had his heart for far too long. His fluttering heart swells almost as large as his pupils and the ache in his erection, calling for Will, wanting every inch of him.

He sinks down, tasting his tears, sweat and salt ruthlessly spasming in his mouth.

It is everything he has dreamed of and yet so much more, discovering his fingers walk down and around towards *his* former emptiness, teasing a tighter, gentle pout with the idea of liberation.

Will sobs, warm fingers relocating to clutch the back of *his* neck.

Electricity fizzles between shoulder blades, sending a wider push against teasing finger pads.

His cradling tongue and muffled moans trace every slim, fleshy ruck, leisurely savoring and smelling every deep, adrenally tart note begin to curl, shifting from short, sharp gasps into long, smooth, desperate fermatas. He sharply breathes through his nose, descending even further with a better, gentle grip, a violent jerk across his rounded, stagnant tongue nearly matching a rhythmic, breathy stutter overhead. And the temptation to hum or hollow out his cheeks is *still* too great a feat as earthy-scented, scratchy brown curls tickle the tip of his nose and smooth, sensitive satin against his chin, *yearning* to prolong this for as long as possible.

He inadvertently grumbles, despite not wanting to stop.

Will cries out, launching into touch-starved octaves.

And one shivering rung sings a siren call, the dry tip of a pinky a gradual suggestion.

The fingers curled around his neck tighten, a compassionate thumb sliding up and down the warm, sticky beginnings of his spine.

He softly pants, intensely lightheaded in the slightly golden darkness behind closed eyelids, conjuring a soft, humming breeze down his mouthful and matted ground cover. And inner thighs tremble even harder, rattling a resounding hymn into his ribcage, their desperate, pheromone-stained aroma and a filthy, wet flick of his tongue almost making *him* see stars.

“Ah... fuck... oh..."

An obscenely silken tip thrusts forward, knocking at his soft, upper palate.

He lifts into another register, sighing across the most delicious four and a half inches he has ever tasted.

Will shakily grasps a handful of hair, hissing through his teeth.

A shattered yelp erupts, realizing his ring finger shifts evocatively towards his pinky and a wider, acknowledging pout. And everything vibrates from afar, expectation a renewed baptism across freshly dried stomach hair. He grunts a hot, uneven noise down Will's perfection and surrenders to erratically swaying temples, drowning in all that is William Graham, all of the lovely noises coming from his mouth, his glossary of fragrances, and that exquisitely smooth tip starting to knock at his uvula.

"Oh, oh, bab—H-Han...”

A faint, rich wave weakly beads down his throat, and he is sweetly humbled.

He softly chuckles behind closed eyes, its vibrations gliding down another flavorful, harsh spasm and provoking another waft against wet, matted dark curls, *submerged* in the full-bodied though resisting taste and every minute note. His tongue curves, taking his time to savor bitter, salty sweat and muskier fat, happily sighing into shivering skin, almost as sated as Will looks.

He hums, blinking up into dark eyes, releasing with a lewd pop.

Will topples back onto his elbows, gasping for air.

He grins, blinking up at the most beautiful man dropping his head back and continuing to catch his breath, a beautifully tanned and sparsely hairy bare chest and stimulated, dark-pink nipples frantically flexing. An honest, clear-eyed smile shines unguardedly down at fuller, wet stomach hair covering the apex of *his* sealed artistry, truly comprehending Will's level of touch deprivation for the past year, or rather, until two weeks ago.

And it *is* almost a pity to refuse him, despite their silent, mutual agreement.

He shakily drops back onto his ankles, crooning as his pinky finger rolls further inward.

Muscles snap firmly, pinching his efforts.

“Ah, shit...” groans with a gentle chuckle overhead.

He bites off a quiet mewl, nipping at warm, inner thigh meat.

And a disembodied huff breathes.

The hand still in his hair gently brushes from front to back.

His lips studiously part with a quiet, wet noise, the tip of his ring finger slightly daring the chasm alongside a receptive, deep inhale. And his half-agonized, burning gaze lifts, trembling, meeting dark blue-ringed, dilated pupils sparkling with unexpected and rather awestruck, sadistic glee. They wince slightly, their delicious tint slowly reflecting an empathetic shade of *his* plea back down to him.

“Fu-uck,” Will chuckles, shaking his bright, brown curls and letting out a soft, open-mouthed sigh, tenderly combing through fringe with a twinkle in his bright, enthralled gaze. A deep groan fills *his* chest, a ruthless, lightly convulsing erection awashed with anguish. And a nervously burning crevasse stretches even wider, the bite sending ripples into fibrous caverns. He blinks down to Will’s perfect lap, hovering his lips even closer to one thigh, softly kissing the slowly blushing pink bruise against paler olive skin. “Ha-Hannibal Lecter on *his* knees, taking care of *my* cock.”

Electricity rips down his spine, flinching up to meet an even darker, playful gaze.

“B-but aren’t you still doing all of the work, *again* ?” smugly grins down at him, provocatively nodding a finely bearded chin over his head towards submerged fingers while lightly tugging his hair.

He yelps, hotly sighing.

Will smooths his fingers back through as if in apology.

Physiological lightning ruthlessly clamps dry fingertips, sending another internal tide hurtling towards his target. A whimper already cries out behind closed lips as he drops his cheek to Will’s marked, soft thigh, listening to the slight uptick in its coursing, oceanic rhythm.

“I thought I said *I* would take you...”

He chuckles, gently kissing charging skin and discovering four and a half inches weakly flagging.

And there is no way to tell if he is dizzy from Will's refreshed erection or such softly commanding diction, the attempt to quirk a tiny, glowing smile spinning the bedroom even faster.

He shakily sits back onto his glutes, fingertips slipping out with ease and a somewhat sated weight bobbing higher up against soft, damp stomach hair, arousing a soft wave of goosebumps. But there is still too much temptation to tear the love of his life apart with his mouth and perhaps with one or two playful fingers despite the mutual desire for purposeful, slicked persistence.

He teasingly bites that small, pink welt on Will’s lap, improving on its blossom.

"T- *tear* you apart until...”

Fingertips lightly trace over Will’s stiffening length as if it silently mocks the state of *his* burden.

"Un-until you make even louder noises than you did earlier." Will gasps up another octave amid a taunting moan, his wide-eyed, teasing gaze following him as *he* awkwardly stands. His chin raises, playfully proud, the gray bristles in Will's dark brown beard even more prominent against burning, Argentinian sunlight, shining upwards with an intense yet pure bright blue, tear-slicked wonderment. "I ... I heard you..."

“ *What* did you hear, my darling?” he grins, hearing his warm voice tease back.

Knees fall on the sliver of mattress between spread-out, hot inner thighs, warm glutes and fallen elbows shuffling slowly backward across unmade, gray bedsheets.

He prowls forward on his hands and gently cracking knees, catching up to and caging playfully withdrawing, coarse shins, a sharp wave of goosebumps flowing down his spine.

“ *You* know what...” Will grins lopsidedly.

He climbs, lustfully smirking into pupils dilating with blinding awe and soft, exaggerated arrogance.

His calves straddle smooth, quaking thighs, that soft light spilling out onto tall, olive-stained cheekbones and bearded cheeks, gently lifting the ends of pinker lips. A deep, resolute inhalation echoes against the slight rise of Will’s chin, that hue unhurriedly growing darker, deliciously unchaste.

Will sits up beneath him.

And air sharply blows out of his nose against a soft rush of bedsheets, the thoughtful gears across his face coming to a standstill. The most beautiful, smug grin lights up his face, a dangerously suggestive flicker sending playful pupils to grin into *his* .

Lips round with a silent gasp, inching closer to Will's.

Short eyelashes flicker downwards, merely acknowledging their half-opened state.

"D-don't play coy..."

Will smiles, sweetly blinking back up.

He grins, completely aglow into that endless, softly contracting gaze, cradling a bearded cheek and silently adoring this version of Will. And *this* version of Will presses his lips together, the humble, clear light in his face darkening even further.

Another wave of goosebumps surges.

Minutes pass silently, lost in fixated, beaming cerulean eyes.

He breathes in Will's air and mutis mutandis, silent currents crashing from the texture of gently hairy thighs against his ankles, the soft, fleshier meeting of thighs. And Will's slender, curved erection further up his lap burns with increased heat, seducing, urging him even harder.

Deep, lustful pupils twitch back into a warmer, happy tint.

And their eyelids flicker, half-awkward, smiling question marks slowly igniting, almost as if waiting for *his* suspicions to be confirmed.

Wilder thuds start to command *his* heartbeat, desperation crackling off synapses-drunk, naked skin as his unignorable erection festers, *waiting* for the moment he is manhandled either onto his back or hands and knees, *ready* and willing to provide whatever Will asks him.

"Never coy, my darling Will..." he sweetly hums, harshly exhaling while nuzzling a delightfully scratchy cheek, still amazed at the silent agreement that *he* is to be pillaged. Expectation leaks uncaringly, *knowing* Will can sense his ruthless, agony-drenched eagerness as legitimate worry towards the boy's inclinations flickers. A slow, deep breath collects himself, preparing for the inevitable elephant of consent still faintly hovering in the sliver of space between mouths. "B-but..."

Lip wrinkles purse across Will's neck, caressing his fingers down a shivering waist.

Will drops his head on top of his shoulder, cool, rhythmic breaths murmuring into his collarbone.

Finger pads softly dig into *his* hips.

An even shakier sigh lifts and tilts back into open air, shaking his head sharply to one side.

"Are you sure you want to experience the full experiential *girth* ..." He pauses, sending a cheeky grin down to softly parted, curved lips without moving his head, blinking back into sweetly impudent, enlarged pupils just as affected as his. "Of it all?"

Hands grip his ass, pushing him forward.

Hot, lewd gasps fall into Will's open-mouthed sighs.

"D-don't care..." Will whispers across *his* lips, leaning in even closer as he shakes dark golden-brown curls with a gentle, echoing inhale. Its outtake flutters, the heat emanating from its stream moving another half inch forward, almost laying on top of his mouth. *He* melts, watching gently crossed, dilated eyes flicker down to acknowledge the distance, then back into his. "T-to know I *could* elicit noises like that out of you..."

"You could elicit far more than *that* , mon cœur..."

His grin closes that distance, letting Will taste himself.

And he audibly shivers against a very insistent tongue, surrendering to *Will's* needs.

Fingers brush through his hair, resting on the back of his head.

Lips click apart, a soft, high-pitched noise interspersed between hushed gasps.

He languidly kisses and bites down Will's jaw, moving down past a stubbled, submental border and onto a smooth neck flavored with salt and sunshine. Murmuring groans grow louder with every pinch, stuttering, upward thrusts partially relieving *his* burden. Hot, firm fingers have moved sometime between open-mouthed grunts and the swirling patterns across tongues, gripping tightly onto delicate, slim cushion.

And he sobs into Will's collarbone, fully exposed.

A courageous thumb slides down toward unexplored territory by a man such as Will.

His forehead rests against a sweat-glazed shoulder, crying out a low, deep noise.

Eyelids surrender to a deeper darkness and his teeth sink into his bottom lip, the boy's gently piqued breath and heartbeat even louder behind closed eyes. He rumbles against Will's soft, upper chest, sliding careful fingertips down towards an even more neglected nipple.

Hot, sweat-stained handprints climb up his back.

He lifts, blindly ducking down to kiss uncontrolled, stammering sighs, the trembling, desperate noises coming from *his* chest barely sounding like himself.

A hand clutches his shoulder blade, the other the back of his head.

Will brushes forward, foundations meeting with rife suggestion.

His lips fall open, calling a loud whimper to the ceiling.

He twitches even more ruthlessly, happily sated and pinned between lightly coarse, firm stomachs, a soft plea lightly rechristening that certain apex.

The handprint curled around his neck drops, squeezing tender flesh.

And he is pushed, urged forward.

A low, happily unrestrained groan falls out.

Soft, trailing stomach hair caresses equally soft, trailing stomach hair, caging sensitive, rucked flesh.

Hot tears sting his eyes and an even lower moan rises from the depths of his testicles, realizing he gives in, already helplessly rutting against the poor boy and unable to stop himself. And he is on fire, trembling and glazed with sweat as something seems to begin to rise to the surface, animal desire or the perception of a person-suit ebbing or flowing from naked skin.

And Will surging up against him does not help much either.

He opens his eyes to stark white vaulted ceilings glistening with the late-morning sun, catching his breath. Air gulps in from afar, a loud inhale echoing through his throat as fireworks crackle, half-sated into a sex-scented, dreamier tempo, his heartbeat pounding a loud, violent rhythm.

Will's hands slide down, producing a loud rustle.

A steady, hollow gasp falls from open lips.

They close.

He wets his throat, a soft glug in his eardrums reflecting whether he should prepare for the plunge or continue to tame his wildly beating heart. Thunder bolts vibrate deeply into his bones, aching, *needing* Will inside him.

Will swallows up against his neck, the noise a silent click.

A wave of goosebumps crashes, sparsely hairy thighs even finer beneath his seat.

Gasps transform into weaker, aware sighs.

Gentle, dry, open-mouthed kisses noisily entwine half the curve of his Adam's apple.

He happily groans, feeling thicker tears at his lower lashes as he wraps an arm around the tremor in the boy's gently sweating shoulders, wanting to bury his face into their radiating, Will-scented shell. The hands on his lower back push him forward, rocking him up against a harshly stuttering urethral vein.

Low grumbles breathe, echoing across neck tendons.

And a softer nibble grazes the hard of his throat.

He immediately flinches backward.

The bedroom spins.

He drowsily blinks down at his hand laying against Will's breast, realizing his fingers have shuffled down onto its nipple. An equally aroused, lightly anxious heartbeat gently echoes from the other side of his sternum, amazed desperation thrumming into his thumb bone. And *he* is at fault for this beautiful cadence, softer tears tingling within their respective ducts.

His mouth waters, *longing* to take every inch of Will's gorgeous, bare chest.

Sighs slowly fade into silence, a steady, muffled hum rumbling into his collarbone.

Two loud harmonious pulses still pound, recovering or preparing.

Will leans back with a soft murmur, bedsheets rustling beneath him.

He smiles, shivering against the absence of warm skin, looking down to watch his thumb admiringly trace around a slowly pruning, silken areola.

A lightly sweating hand cradles *his* down-turned cheek.

And he is moaning a strong but gentle, chest deep-sound from afar, leftover tears spilling from his eyes.

They blink to meet a quiet, radiant smile.

Will smiles unguardedly, the soft light bursting across pink cheeks while brushing a sideways thumb across *his* cheekbone, lifting to catch pooling tears. The ends of his lips lift, feeling his heart explode and expectation shake, metronomic weight fluttering forward, coating another sagittal plane.

“Sh-show me...” moans weakly too, *too* close to his lips.

His tear-filled eyes slightly flicker, a half-daring, dark blue gleam blinking up from *his* mouth and pupils slightly cross with distance.

Certain, warm lips wetly part with an inaudible breath.

Will moves in even closer, grazing the tip of his nose alongside *his* , compassion confidently overtaking that dilated gaze.

He shudders, lost in their boundless, cross-eyed depths, lightheaded by a more intense, pungent smell of tangy arousal and salty sweat slowly pushing him outside of himself. And a specific teasing, xylophonic twitch quivers the tips of his toes, something he has not felt since the first time he explicitly made *love* .

Eyelashes quickly flutter, blinking down across cheeks to softly smile at his lips.

“A-at least until your self-sufficiency relents,” whispers passionately against his mouth.

He groans a helpless, guttural noise, glowing adoringly into Will’s eager face shining through *his* eclipsing shadow. Throat muscles slowly begin to form wondering out loud as to what *this* Will Graham has done to the man he had fallen in love with so long ago. But he can barely complain, dropping his hand to its side and inadvertently thumping the container of coconut oil.

A smirk acknowledges its timely presence, his eyebrows raising.

Will shakes his head, affectionately rolling his eyes with a silent quirk of his shoulders.

Lips press together, somewhat disappointed to release such beautiful friction.

Knees and shins shuffle backwards, goosebumps rippling from the texture of loud bedsheets.

And he turns just enough to half-blindly grab lambskin from his nightstand drawer, soft bedding hugging kneecaps and sending chills down his spine. Light, slightly agonizing

spirals tease temples, partly outside of himself. It *is* almost effortless to regard all of this as accommodating, unrelenting self-sufficiency at first glance, if it weren't for a rather Pavlovian response as host.

Knees return, straddling Will's thighs, half-seductively ripping the packaging open with his teeth.

Nerves enter dark blue eyes locked onto his, a slow, preparing deep breath trembling.

His heartbeat lifts into a new, somewhat surprised but startlingly complete tempo, the leaking weight against his stomach taking its final, softly aching bounce inches away from Will's. He cautiously smiles, gazing directly into a progressively gentle fire behind enlarged, shining pupils. And just off his periphery, Will's bare, sun-kissed shoulders heave against a loud, resolute breath.

His gaze blinks down without moving his head, overgrown fringe softly grazing his cheekbones.

Lambskin is applied with a light touch although still at a slight distance.

And he is thrumming all over, never entirely immune to the anticipation although tempered with empathy for Will's relative virginity. A softly twitching fingertip lowers to blushing foundations, skimming half of the band's circumference, still stunned that Will would *want* this.

Disbelief cannot help but swim, tilting the air at an even more violent angle.

His pulse skips, profoundly moved.

Perhaps this is what Will has attempted to achieve for these past two months, the purposeful search for a new, capable version of trust in his chapped and callused fingers. They fondle delicate, fleshier cushion, traveling around to ensure himself with a smooth cascade. A deep, sharp intake crushes his molars against one another, almost losing it at the sight of Will touching himself.

And it is *he* who must seek a new, *purer* reliability within those cautious, almost unconsciously seductive finger pads. Nevertheless, it is a strange reliability in uncharted territory, the predominantly secure perimeter where change can and cannot be entirely compromised.

Cautious yet willing, dark blue slowly meets his rising gaze.

And the boy attacks his mouth, kissing him like a man possessed.

He chuckles, nestling dry fingers against his trembling emptiness.

The coconut oil lid clicks open and closes, sending out echoing wavelengths.

"Mm..." he hums softly, keeping the sliver of distance between lips, grunting between his teeth against a braver, self-induced stretch across a quiet, quivering sigh. "N-not too much,

my darling, mon chérie. I *intend* ...”

A deeper laugh pulses across naturally fuller, lower plush.

It drops wider, a soft moan calling out.

“To *feel* your effort,” he smiles, smirking back into gently humored, sparkling blue-ringed eyes gradually tinting even more oceanic. Will smirks with a tiny shake of his head, releasing from greasing himself and clutches his seat with a sleek hand. And he is kissed so softly and sweetly, a high-pitched hum snorts through his nose and a less expectant baptism nearly coats that aged smile.

“Sadist...” gently hisses between shallower, open-mouthed kisses.

He laughs, shuffling forward in Will’s lap and happily ambushing his mouth.

Deep, preparing breaths waft, kisses and soft groans reliable codas.

Lake-scented air teeters, unrelenting incredulity sinking into surging, sharp goosebumps.

He holds onto tense shoulders and shakily props himself up, pressing down onto a lightly soaked though woefully clothed slit. Ringed flesh shudders and convulses, sighing, drinking in Will’s groan streaming alongside a warm, stuttering exhale. And a shivering, sweating arm slips around his waist, wandering its palm down to cup, spreading him wide.

An unbridled groan hums down into his stomach, tilting his head back.

“Fu-uck...” purrs from below.

His eyes open, looking down into utterly stunned, dilated pupils.

A different, strange but glowing light spreads across tanned cheeks, pouring through bright brown and gray-speckled brush. Tears lie softly at the corners of a wide-eyed stare, unflinching pupils shining into his, believing Will to be the most beautiful being to ever walk the earth, and all of this feels strange and yet not.

“H-Hannibal, y-you're sh-shaking...” and the boy scans down the full breadth of his nakedness.

Curious, navy blue eyes land, acknowledging the aching, softly dripping weight against his stomach for what seems like minutes. A content shiver ripples across his entire body, unflappably hardening and his adoration unceasingly evident.

He sighs, allowing the noise to hollow down his throat.

But between balancing on Will’s quivering, swaddled tip and knowing that that progressively wanting, tear-filled gaze has barely looked at his erection until now, he cannot feel any more naked but no less confident. His forehead starts to slump against a sudden, downward weight, spiking-hot, delirious sparks leaping off already helplessly vibrating skin.

A hint of humor peeks through Will's shorter lashes.

"H-Hannibal Lecter..." he teasingly intones, blinking up through a dryer lash line, provoking an intense, bright twinkle in his eye and a gradual, lop-sided smile widening against that knee-weakening, commanding diction. "Sh-shaking in *my* arms..."

He shivers, breathlessly chuckling.

"W-Will..." a laugh sighs, bending down to kiss soft lips.

Will swallows his own name, both mouths groaning and sucking in sharp breaths.

He shakily hums, managing to sit back on top of a sleek, twitching tip that practically vibrates into his tailbone, nearly dying at the thought of the boy's exquisite, *unclothed* ridges buried inside him.

His eyes contently close, surrendering.

Will's outtake shudders up against his mouth, gulping for air.

He smiles down at that quiet, illuminating calm with a deep, hollow breath, cupping a square, bearded jawline. And his lips slowly shape into a pout, sinking even further into a soft, soulful kiss.

Breath synchronizes with cooler breath, lost in exhaling Will's intakes and mutis mutandis for what feels like minutes. But Will chokes on accidentally held breath, the bluster and noise violently rippling beneath skin as the boy retreats, burying a groan into *his* bare shoulder.

"Oh, my love..." he growls, nipping up that criminally warm neck, aligning his lips against an obscenely smooth earlobe at an even closer distance, whispering, "Breathe, my darling."

A shiver runs up his spine, repositioning.

And a broken cry echoes onto a sweat-glazed temple, lips nestling behind the upturned hinge of his jaw.

Muffled, uneven moans sigh up into Will's ear.

A warm, trembling elbow crease wraps around his waist, an insistent, quivering frequency surging into his tailbone, vibrating all the right spots below. Open-mouthed gasps already pour onto a sensitive earlobe, rising into frenzied registers against Will's shuddering and blood flow rushing like asphyxiated seashells.

A gentle, low grunt rustles smile lines, bristles lightly burning *his* cheek.

He turns, brushing the tips of their noses together.

Will casts wide, glassy, unfocused eyes up at him, opening his lips soundlessly.

Another clothed quarter inch consumes him, a simultaneous burn and tickle.

A hot growl erupts, scrunching his eyes shut and tilting his chin into the air.

“O-oh... God... H-Han...”

The gentle noise of skin meeting skin slaps behind thin eyelids.

And a soft but firm touch clutches a shoulder slope.

"Shh, mon chérie..." he groans, blindly reaching over to palm a sparsely hairy breast, falling prey to the sharp but soft, slick glide. Self-sufficient inner muscles shiver just as helplessly. But disbelief still endures with *some* distance, slightly disappointed that he is not completely with Will even with that beautiful cock partly inside him. And that fine line between contributor and influencer begins to blur, desperate to crawl inside Will’s piqued heat with no escape. He brushes a hardened nipple upwards, moaning against Will grunting a hot, clipped noise. “You feel perfect, my darling. Je’taime, je—”

He widens, naturally sinking even further.

He pants loudly, stammering to the heavens and arching forwards.

Will’s rough fingers pinch into his ass.

Shivers erupt down his spine, marveling at the fight and burn.

And deep, sharp pulses tremble, retaliating nerves biting and pinching into a resolute, fiery twitch.

“Fuck...”

“Oh, Will...” he purrs, squeezing his eyes shut, struggling against thrusting into stomach hair. Will's obscenely smooth, sweaty tip jerks slowly, almost experimentally inside him. He gasps, losing his breath and sending out a broken, blissfully defeated noise almost in coordination with his slightly stuttering prostate. Will grunts as he shifts beneath him, making it nearly impossible to grind up into his lap and separating sensitive flesh with a soft, wet click. Hot, stuttering gasps pour out of already open lips. “D-don’t move, my love.”

His lips drop onto the apex of a cheekbone, lifting to blindly taste saltier sweat against a firmly determined temple.

“Ooh, Jesus, Hannibal. I... I...”

“I know...” he hears himself hotly moan into Will’s gasps, half-open-mouthed soft sighs and hums echoing down one another’s throats, stanzas of kisses even higher-pitched squeaks. “I know, I know...”

And he sinks even further, groaning louder.

That warm, resolute hand holds him open with an even tighter grip.

Eyelids pinch, a near deafening growl slipping between gritted teeth.

“Oh, you feel magnificent, my darling,” he whispers, grumbling a low, guttural noise, taking a soft lower lip into his mouth. Will whimpers, and the dizzying, softening atmosphere thankfully half-distracts from the numbing but beautifully ecstatic pain.

Lips wetly part, sinking another quarter-inch.

“And if *I* knew any better...” Will teases that smooth, soft-spoken command, brushing a warm, confident thumb across fuller, delicate flesh. He opens his eyes with a shiver, an even heavier weight lying up against his stomach. And he is looking down at that returning dark, suggestive hint glowing up between eyelashes. Will smugly grins, sharply inhaling and slowly tilting back to meet gentler smile lines, mildly taunting, dark eyebrows quirking. “I-it *still* looks like you’re trying to control the situation, Hannibal.”

A low, rough chuckle runs through his throat, indulging.

And he is groaning a higher octave into Will’s kiss, his insides vibrating with the slight forward angle.

Will’s tongue brushes its way in, the smooth, multi-textured moisture layering on top of more than half an inch twitching its way inside him. A high-pitched whimper pours into a warm throat that isn’t his, hearing his heart skipping a blissful beat.

A gentle grind tests where they are, and he blossoms, descending.

Will mewls a higher, weak noise.

Quivering inner muscles clamp, fighting back.

And a warm lap and soft, wet, groomed hair begins to radiate closer.

Each of his internal muscles helplessly spasm, sending the gradually less stabbing pain up into his stuttering prostate and causing a little flutter in his pulse. He pants, a part of him aching to see what the glorious progression of all four and a half inches would look like from a rear-view mirror.

He flags even higher, continuing to pant up a steady yet desperate scale.

“J-Jesus...”

He looks down, fringe falling into his eyes, dizzily smiling down into Will’s.

And freer fingers start to inch towards his suffering.

“Mm, thank you, but no, Will...” he hears himself murmur, grinning even more lightheadedly into unfocused, bright blue eyes, a complimenting, happy shade tinting their furrows bordering studious, lightly smiling dilated pools. He leans forward, a zing of heat ringing through him as he sighs against lips parting with escalating, hiccupping gasps, deeply growling, “I *intend* to be taken apart like this...”

A more purposeful forward grind emphasizes intention.

“Fu-uck...” Will groans, gripping tightly at his fringe.

And he hums, grinning, allowing himself to be dragged down into the most reverential kiss, tears and stars appearing behind closed eyes.

Their lips separate with a quieter, wet clack.

“Then I... I...” smoothly shakes across his upper lip, watching Will blinking away and blowing sharp air out of his noise as he tries to catch his breath. A wholehearted grin lifts, sitting even taller and manipulating a burning, surging tidal wave as open mouths hover, shuddering into one another. Will winces, hissing fiercely through his teeth, woozily grinning down to his lips. “I *intend* to take you apart like this, this time anyway.”

Breathy, needy noises sing up a scale.

And he swells even harder, groaning out long notes near the top.

Will’s soft, rough curls drop against *his* collarbone, gently calling out a hot breeze down a nipple and slipping a warm inner elbow around his lower back.

Eyelids flicker shut.

He can feel a quiet, powerful heartbeat through its thinly-skinned pulse point, a soft clench against his back sweat assisting in lowering him a few more centimeters. He grits his teeth and grunts, firm, warm abdominal skin and even finer, downy sagittal paths urging in all directions, taunting him to spill.

Damp palmistry replaces that pulse point, steadily pushing him forward.

Muscles retaliate, squeezing into a harsher shudder.

He softly gasps, vibrating while squeezing the back of Will’s neck and caressing lower hanging curls before they lower, feeling the heat of bright cheeks radiate up towards his.

Hot lips lean forward and hover, intoxicated by the soft, dry taste streaming from Will’s mouth and nostrils. A gentle roar opens *his* wider, drinking the boy in, losing himself in sensation and that it is *Will* providing this, officially sinking into surrender’s dizzier waters. And every part of his sweating body shakes with inaudible screams, needing, *needing* the pain inside him to start moving.

Fingertips softly play within the greasier curls around the nape of a sweating neck.

And he has slid further down into Will’s lap, the ends of unruly, harsh curls a breath away from his seat.

He whimpers behind closed lips, closing his eyes skyward.

A nose tip slides across his neck.

A content smile playfully spreads, the room spinning around him.

No doubt, the boy has been influenced by what may be perceived as a kink of some sort. And bristles seem to knowingly chafe across his Adam's apple, cartilage smoothing across the slight burn as if in apology. Goosebumps erupt, gladly helpless to lower whiskers and cool breath tickling sensitive collarbone skin.

He arches his back, choking to the heavens.

Will exists so close to his objective, his insides tremble.

He smiles inside golden-stained darkness, rocking forward.

And Will is kissing him so attentively *his* lips fall open, mewling into a wonderfully attentive mouth and all of its deep, satisfied groans, closed eyes surrendering to an even more erratic, spiraling lightheadedness and liking it. He slips down another inch, giving up on chasing the gradual high, bearing the quivering fire and biting off a loud, almost embarrassingly high sound.

Hips nearly press into Will's lower ribs, offering deeper access with a quick, downward glance.

And Will's eyes flutter shut, dropping his head back with a long, open-mouthed sigh.

"J-Jesus, H-H-Han—" Will attempts to recover while blazing a grayer shade of deep blue, gliding a sweaty, gentle grip to rest on his hip. His softer, dry grin opens with a gasp, a spark flickering in delirious, large pupils as a faint shake of his head continues to sway a second later. "O-oh, Jesus. I never knew it c-could..."

"B-be like this, Will?" he chuckles, hotly gasping, lightly pushing down against a soft, anticipating spurt that almost shoots directly onto his prostate.

He shivers, discovering Will slip in even deeper and achieving both of their goals, smoothing down the sparse hair surrounding nipples. But it is rather difficult not to find ample poeticism, having imagined these very words so many minutes prior.

A hot stream of breath murmurs.

His lips linger close, drinking every last drop.

And he retreats another half inch, a teasingly torturing sparkle in his eyes.

"Oh, my love, I already knew..." he smiles unguardedly down into shining, brighter blue furrows, feeling hot, callused fingertips slide up his cheekbone and tracing circles into its apex. As if on cue, a softer, almost romantic twitch gains wider territory, and lips open with a slight click, exhaling a long, low breath.

But words silently revise themselves, not quite knowing *this* .

He shakily grinds forward, ecstatically alight.

Soft, long fringe slides down his cheekbones, evoking goosebumps.

Will glows directly into his eyes, sweetly tucking one side behind an ear.

His grin grows.

A willing sunlight radiates through body heat and into Will's eyes, unaware of where his weightless, glowing bedroom and his happily impaled self begins and ends. And he woozily ducks down, mouthing at an exquisite, plush lower lip, synapses tingling and leaping off of a blanketing heat.

They pull back with a quieter sound.

Drowsy, slate blue smiles, and he cannot help but smile back.

Fingertips drag another waterfall down Will’s chest, happily manipulating nipples.

Sunlight-stained brown curls drop back, drifting just above dark gray sheets.

Eyes close, hearing a soft, elongated gasp exhaling from a distance.

Will lifts back up beneath him, sweetly but firmly grabbing him by the hair.

He shouts to the ceiling, every shivering, warmly encased muscle and nerve nearly exploding out of his body and curling toes. Sharper, drying pinches spasm a delicious rhythm, guiding a new, fuller frequency towards his prostate, and he is loudly gasping to the white-on-white beams overhead.

“Fu-fuck...”

Animal instinct gradually takes over, brushing a wrinkling nipple upwards.

And a low, hot shudder vibrates up against his lips.

His hips lift and tilt their way backwards, but warm, callused hands hold him in place.

Eyes slowly begin to open to question this, but Will is already thrusting a single, loud slap of sensitive, smooth skin up against him. He clenches his teeth around a yelp, resisting rolling his eyes into the back of his head. Their whites burn, discovering a barely repentant Will Graham smugly grinning up into them, huffing that beautiful smile wide-open. And a determined, fascinated brighter gray-blue crackles around a slow, deep breath, beaming down at the unrelenting weight on his stomach.

A quiet exhale shivers through lips, heart rate happily skyrocketing.

Sweat glides down to the top of a finely cut, sun-kissed cheekbone, and Will is enviably piercing teeth into his bottom lip with deep concentration.

He retreats, sinking back down onto warm, coarse thighs.

Eyelids pinch shut, lifting his chin with a quiet shudder.

“Ah, sh-shit, H-Hannibal...”

He smirks, leaning in to blindly wipe away another bead of sweat.

“Co-consider *that* my of-official res-ig-nation, my darling...” he laughs, gulping for air down at the smiling warmth emanating off Will’s face, knowing his words happily compromised by that delightful twitch.

His eyes open, finding warm, tanned cheeks lit up from within.

A tiny, almost coquettish grin creeps onto the corners of his lips, softly sliding back down onto Will. His gaze automatically slams shut, softly groaning up into a golden-brown glow.

Bristly curls tickle the fleshier meat of buttocks, Will’s soft stomach hair and exquisite, slightly slanted hardness inside him fine and yet hazy. Circulation starts to reroute, shouting and screaming for relief or release, victim to even more synapses exploding off skin and open lips unable to restrain desperate, high-pitched noises.

And he undulates an even more insistent spasm forward.

But he takes a deep, shaky breath, silently denying himself despite wanting the group effort.

Blood flow hums a rocky but gentle current through thinner skin across pulse points, knowing the execution may be possibly misconstrued as acclimation. Chills run across Will’s lightly trembling thighs, deliciously prickling his seat and hamstrings, sending frequencies down into his arches. He cannot be anymore ready and willing to accept any kind of move the boy may make, yearning for the offering of secondhand effort.

Will jerks even softer although further away from his target, and he purrs lighter, needy noises.

The grip on the back of Will’s sweaty neck tightens, anchoring the rest of his weight against a sweetly pruning nipple. And he is shaking even without either of them moving, Will’s clothed tip lingering centimeters away from truly tearing him apart, dripping sweat and subjugation onto his lower abdominals.

Dark, charcoal blue stares *down* at the progress lustfully.

And Will breathes hard through open lips, the steady rise and fall of that chest beneath his palm riddled with a slightly erratic heart rate.

“Ah, mmm... Will,” whispers weakly with no real demand.

Will slaps back up into him mid-tide, and he lets out the loudest groan.

A chuckle erupts, breathing across sensitive lips.

“Y-you make me think you almost prefer it like *this* , Hannibal...” Will teases in that familiar, teasing tone, softly running a single, teasing index finger from axis to tailbone. He whimpers, unable to restrain goosebumps across that same path, knowing he will not last long. A softer

thrust claps up against him, muscles and prostate, and even his toes, quivering as he presses forward and finding it difficult to stop.

“N-never took you to be so submissive in bed like this...” pulses against his mouth, an inkier blue lifting between eyelashes before fully blinking up into his hazier gaze, “Or...”

Will slaps even harder up into him.

A grunt is heard through clenched teeth, soundlessly releasing, open-mouthed, towards the ceiling.

Soft, barely-there kisses trail back down his neck, the slight shift off his prostate a welcome reprieve.

“Or is it because it’s me?” Will growls although muffled by his neck, gently biting.

And he is soaring, lightheaded, finishing rutting into warm, sticky stomach hair and realizing he restrains a light orgasm from christening Will’s abdominals, mid-stream. Delirious tears cling to the corners of his eyes, electricity surging across and beneath skin and goosebumps, completely unable to speak and feeling outside yet inside himself.

A handprint releases the back of an even sweatier, relaxed neck.

He opens his eyes, sweetly smiling down into a mass of brown and gold and gray curls. And his hand is reaching for Will’s face, cupping one cheek hoping body language can suffice.

“It’s OK, y-you don’t have to answer...” purrs beneath all of that hair, vibrating his collarbone.

Will looks back up into his eyes, softly sparkling, grinning blue maintaining that darker tone.

Goosebumps freckle down intersecting, bare skin.

“God, you feel perfect...” and that smile transforms into pure awe, blinking down at his lips and scanning down the full breadth of his nakedness. A murmur is already cooing, aching for total relief but barely wishing for those attentive eyes and fingers to stop devouring him. His hips slightly wiggle with need, accidentally making it even better for Will.

Freer, rough fingers slide down *his* chest, softly brushing across the top of a smooth navel and sweeping across the beginnings of an already stained sagittal path with a curious thumb print. And they all gently slide onto his waist and down to a less occupied hip, tightly gripping as a softer, docile twitch retreats.

A soft wail beckons the last two inches to return.

They snap up into him.

“Oh merde,” he moans, closing his eyes to vaulted ceilings turning into an early afternoon shade of sunlight, a soft whisper shivering out, “F-fuck.”

Will slowly slides the tip of his nose close to an Adam's apple, uttering a quiet hum.

He rocks forward, grinding, happily dying.

And warm hips tilt up towards his, every straining, confident but slightly drying inch familiar with broader surroundings and ready to mark its target. Another faint stretch almost loses the burn entirely, and eyelashes flutter shut at the deep warmth inside him, knowing it's Will, *knowing* it's a version of Will who wants this, who *shows* signs of wanting to unexpectedly, although softly, dominate him. Tears fill the corners of closed eyes, the weight on his stomach bobbing slightly over towards bristlier stomach hair.

A groan stammers out, urging Will forward.

Breath sighs against his collarbone, and he ruts.

And ruts.

His arms wrap around trembling shoulder blades and hips slant forward, a final, silent act of accommodation lifting his seat enough for Will to have the privilege to abuse him as he pleases. Goosebumps flood down his shivering back and arms, *knowing* the boy can feel his every faulted frequency.

He hides his face into the slope of Will's sweaty shoulder, submerged in the sticky salt and barely-there noises humming into his neck, indulging in a soft bite. Will slides back in with less force, a tighter grip against his hips, and louder groans quiver into sensitive collarbone skin.

A deep, long sigh escapes from open lips.

Bites and kisses lift a path across an earlobe, over a receptive helix.

And he balances his chin against Will's softly vibrating forehead, opening his eyes down onto the crown of thicker gray roots shining in the darker noon sunlight. A softer kiss lands on the top of their half-washed scalp, plunging his lips into roughly smooth curls as their ends lift from *his* shoulder.

But blown out dark blue returns to his, wincing half-smiling question marks.

"C'-cest à cause de t-toi, mon chérie..." breathlessly tumbles from his throat, watching his hand settle just above his favorite areola. He licks the inside of his lips, dying to encase his lips around that supple, peach-brown nub as he sighs the softest groan. "I-it was always you, my darling. B-baise-moi, mon am-amour. Je te veux."

And the hands on his back climb, clutching at his shoulder blades and slapping back up into him.

Lips open around a loud inhale, struggling from closing his eyes and smiling down at Will staring lustfully at *his* leaking suffering or what can be seen of their intertwined bodies. An exhale slides through his rounded mouth, unable to look away from the cautious, low boiling fire in dilated pupils starting to shine up between eyelashes.

A stiff, shrouded tip thrusts, bare, thicker skin following and clapping.

Breath audibly shudders.

And full skin retreats, then lightly slaps against him.

His aching, burning glutes begin to shiver, barely hearing himself groaning and keening.

Will's lips are on his, and he sighs into the wet groans wafting into his mouth.

And the rhythm begins, unrelenting, softly pounding directly onto his preferred spot.

An uncharacteristically high-pitched whine slips down Will's throat, his arms firmly wrapping around an even sweatier neck, temples starting to rock at an increasingly heavier pace. And the thick weight on his stomach bounces even harder, rutting at an incline, slowly realizing from a distance that he is violently shaking.

"W-Will..." whispers in a rarely heard, higher octave across half-open lips, tilting forward to meet a slow, deep kiss. And he can't stop shuddering out that name as lips momentarily part to catch their breath, feeling his voice begin to escalate in a fraught whimper, "Will... Will..."

"Shhh, baby, I got you."

His already vibrating, entire body lights on fire, cuddling up to Will's earlobe.

A long, needy gasp whines from the base of his throat.

He forces his eyes open, groaning even higher and tilting his chin into the air, hearing nothing else but heartbeats and the passionate ebb and wane of breath. Another moderately fast but raw strike takes advantage, and he is fiercely pinching into the quiver meeting with his prostate. One hand releases Will's chest, gripping his hip and forcing them together.

Will sighs up a rhythmic scale.

He releases, cupping that trembling hip.

But he is already crying out against another surging tide.

"Y-yeah..." whispers across his lips with a tiny smile, a glazed-over, dilated dark slate-blue gaze grinning back up into his, "I … I had a f-feeling th-that *you'd* p-prefer this."

Will thrusts back up into him, pausing to unconsciously drag upwards.

And the boy persists, meeting a certain spot on his prostate every time and smacking up against his nearly out-of-shape, quivering glutes almost unable to keep up this never-ending half-squat.

Short, high-pitched wails fall from his lips, not wanting to close his eyes.

Weight falls from his stomach towards Will's, electricity pouring off his entire body.

“W-Will....” and he sighs, whimpering, dropping his head back.

The room softly spins, tilting a little to one side.

“H-hey...” barely interrupts the boy’s gradually drying rhythm, warm fingers cupping his jaw and ushering him to look down at Will’s half-smiling, near-delirious gaze. “Hey. I ngh-n-need to l-look at y-you... O-oh...”

Molars clench against one another, twitching the hinge of his bearded jaw.

“Oh, g-god...” and Will’s narrower eyelids flex wider, his half-startled pupils hardening.

And *he* is nearly falling off the precipice.

The nearly black gaze on him lights up, his other hand dropping to grip softer, sensitive flesh.

“O-ooh... W-Wi....”

He resists surrendering his gaze to the ceiling, wildly grunting down into Will’s lightly agonized but sweetly smiling face and straining, wide eyes looking directly into his. His bobbing weight ruts and grinds against soft, rough stomach hair, the distant noises out of his mouth marking mere seconds from splitting apart just from the look in that beautiful, burning blue-black gaze.

“P-putain! Merde! Oh...”

And he is being gripped, tilted forward and inches away from Will’s lips.

Bolts of electricity leap, unable to move and liking it as an even faster rhythm slams up against him.

Will softly digs his fingernails into his ass, and begins thrusting, pushing into him at a break-neck pace, someone’s hips and knees cracking from the dizzying alternating between distances. He knows he is making noises, but their defining specificities are unimportant as he resists slumping his forehead down onto a smooth, sweaty shoulder.

And everything begins to slow down but not slow down.

Will’s eyelids gradually encircle what little blue rings dilated pupils.

His chin lifts and lips make their way to hang open by half-centimeters.

Breath shallows.

And somehow, he still vibrates at a frantic pace, outside and yet inside himself.

Even the tips of his toes curl, producing a tremor in his arches.

He is falling forward.

And he is falling.

And when Lucifer fell, it was never quite a fall but ascension.

A distantly-heard howl tilts his head back, discovering Will shining beautifully enthralled up at him.

Then black.

Total darkness.

Warmth glows, and a succinct, soft hum levels across skin.

He is aglow, blazing orgasm and divinity.

Smooth cotton at his shoulder blades and lower back.

His eyes open.

And he feels most himself, though starved.

His eyes open, not knowing when they had closed or if they had at all.

A wild heartbeat and erratic gasps cut through the air.

Will groans at a softer distance, realizing he is looking over a heaving, shining shoulder as the weighted, sticky bounce at his stomach proves itself only slightly satiated. All that he knows he is on his back, gasping with his lungs practically on fire and tears dripping into his ears, and a pillow is beneath his ass as Will even more wetly pummels into him. Goosebumps rise from another single smack, sending a soft rustle of bedsheets up between his shoulder blades. And he is shouting and groaning to the warmer sunlight-stained ceiling, ready but not-ready for the agony to end.

Will shines sweetly down at him, brushing fingers through his hair while holding him open.

A trembling smile inches wide, sincere smile lines practically sliding up to wrinkling crow's feet.

And he is already crying.

His hands slide down to the middle of an even sweatier back.

His legs begin to wrap, lightly scraping across a firm, gently rocking waist and settling ankles against tensed, flexing glutes as they thrust forward. And every inch of his insides sob frequencies towards their over-aroused target, Will mindfully staying pressed up against him.

His lips softly huff open, broken, convulsive noises practically matching Will's rhythm.

And pinker lips too far away from his starts to smile, a glow emanating through bearded cheeks sparking with acknowledgment.

The insides of his knees press into the slight curve of a warm waist.

And their inner thighs tremble as he guides those smiling lips down onto his, muffling drawn-out, high-pitched, short cries into Will's panting mouth. The loss of those lips hover, their heat and softly streaming breath helping him break apart as his eyes close, wondering if he is really hearing Will saying "oh fuck, baby, you're going to make *me* finish before you do" from afar.

He forces his eyes open, realizing he is shouting and pushing Will's trembling up against his prostate, leaving him there to relish in their nearly matching frequencies. Knees press into a trembling, thrusting waist and ankles into Will's perfect, flexing ass, and flames consume every inch of internal muscles into higher and higher octaves until...

Until...

Bitten-off growls shiver off the tips of his clenched teeth. And his lips fall open with unbridled shouts to vaulted ceilings, fiercely yet half-exhaustedly splashing up against either stomach. He tilts his chin back, his gaze locked on Will's as ascension gains territory.

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